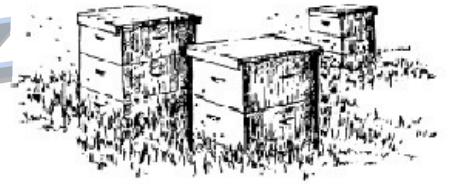




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping



May, 2018

The May 8, 2018 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. Thanks to Peter Moser who volunteered to bring salty treats and Wendy Chopin and Benny and Verosa Philipp (something sweet) for our May meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

One more thing....

With all of our discussion of swarm management, one of our members made a suggestion that must be added to the list. When buying a queen for a backyard hive, have her "clipped", snipping off a wing to make her unable to fly. The colony can decide to swarm, but she won't get far and the pile of bees will be right in front of the hive instead of in the wall of a house somewhere. Offer them a nuc (with drawn comb and lemongrass oil if you have some) and they'll all just march inside. If you really don't want another hive, someone at our next meeting will be glad to take it.

Keep a close eye on your hive for a couple of weeks to make sure they were successful raising a new queen. Of course she will be capable of flight, but if you replace her, have the new queen clipped (unless you want to clip her yourself).

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I can't seem to get my smoker lit, or, should I say, stay lit. There must be a trick.

An A: Ancient people knew that smoke from smoldering fire could be used to calm a honey bee colony so they could rob their honey. Honey bees are woodland creatures and the smell of smoke fools them into thinking the woods are on fire. They gorge on honey and prepare

to evacuate the flames. A full tummy discourages aggressive behavior and the smoke masks the scent of any alarm pheromones in the air.

A smoker is the ubiquitous symbol of beekeeping. Its invention is credited to Moses Quinby in 1875. It is cleverly designed with an entrance below a grate and the smoldering fuel. It allows entry of only enough air to keep the fuel burning by drafting air up and out the "snout". Then, with a few puffs of the bellows, air is blown into the can and a cloud of smoke is created. The fuel may last several hours as it burns frugally awaiting the next puff.

Almost anything that burns relatively slowly can be used as smoker fuel. Remember though that pine straw, pine shavings, dry grass or leaves make pretty pungent smoke. You don't need to asphyxiate yourself, so experiment around for a fuel that isn't unpleasant to you. Try sweetgum balls, clean rags or different wood shavings for example. Roadside cotton picked up down toward Needville makes pretty good smoker fuel. Or you can buy fuel (usually paper pulp or compressed cotton) from the beekeeping supply folks.

Nowadays smokers are made of stainless steel, but they can be found made of (rusted) galvanized steel or even copper. If you are shopping for a smoker, consider the larger sizes since they hold more fuel (and therefore burn longer). Fashion a stopper out of a cork or a corn cob or stick or whatever to smother the fire

when you are finished in the backyard. Relight the remaining fuel next time. A smoker gets hot, so make sure there are adequate guards to prevent burns. A sturdy ring on the snout is a real plus.

Now, to the A. The best way to light a smoker is to fill it about a 1/4 full with good dry fuel. A propane torch can reach down inside to ignite the fuel (the kind that lights by pulling a trigger is well worth the extra bucks). If using matches or a butane lighter, place the fuel (or a small ball of newspaper) within their reach. Shake it to the bottom when lit. Use the bellows to stoke the flames and when it seems to be burning well, upright the smoker and fill it with more fuel. Adding fuel above the fire helps give cool smoke without sparks or flames. Close the snout and puff the bellows a few times and you should be in business.

Always light your smoker before going into a bee hive. Follow a few puffs at the entrance (and the guard bees) with a few more under the cover. You should give the smoke a minute or so to work its magic before opening up the hive.

With use, soot builds up in your smoker. If you bought a propane torch to light it, you can also use it to clean up the mess. Use your torch to ignite the soot, burning with a lazy yellow flame. It leaves behind white ash that is easily brushed away. Don't forget to clean the top rim and inside the snout so it opens and closes easily.



Dues Are Due

Check out the address label on this newsletter. If you see a sad bee, it means you haven't paid your \$5.00 dues for 2018. It also means that you will be dropped from the mailing list and this is your last **Buzz**. You can pay your dues at our May meeting or mail them to Fort Bend Beekeepers Assn., c/o Lynne Jones, 19747 Coppervine, Houston, TX 77084.

April Meeting Notes

We had 60 members and guests sign in at our April meeting. Several attempts at a head count came in between 58 and 62, so the registration was pretty accurate. Good! Always be sure that you register at the back table at our meetings since the sign in sheets are an important club record that supports our use of County facilities.

After 30 minutes of social time, President Jack Richardson called the meeting to order and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack recognized four first time visitors to our meeting. Each was warmly welcomed after telling us of their plans as a beekeeper (most were brand new to beekeeping).

Gene deBons presented an overview of the history of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Records from June, 1978 list 65 members, including 21 charter members of the group. Almost every area of the county was represented, plus Houston and Rockport. Officers of the club over the last 30 years were characterized by long terms of service. Gene was Secretary-Treasurer for 15 years from 1993 until 2008.

Recently departed member Elton Reynolds served as Association President for 23 years, 1983 -1989 and 1993 - 2008. He was born in Beasley and graduated from high school there. He was predeceased by his first wife of 33 years, Eleanor. He is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, Helen. Elton

served in the European theater during WW II and after the war owned a radiator shop in Rosenberg. He joined Allied Concrete in 1961 and retired as Vice President in 1979. After retiring, Elton was introduced to beekeeping and our Association by member Ted Kopycinski. He was very active for many years. Gene shared a series of photos of Elton's activities plus a few stories and lessons he learned under Elton's tutelage. Elton was an excellent teacher and example for children, patient with all and attentive to everyone.

Following Gene's presentation, Jack Richardson reported on mentoring activities at his beeyard the previous weekend, announced plans for a beeyard picnic on May 12 and carpooling to the B. Weaver Buzzfest in Navasota on May 26 and the TBA Summer Clinic on June 12 in Conroe. Jack also showed a swarm trap and reported on his swarm trapping activities.

Nancy Hentschel could use a hand talking about bees at the Sugar Land Earth Day event on April 14.

Next, Harrison Rogers, Association member and Area 5 Director for the Texas Beekeepers Association, gave an overview of the State organization and its role in helping beekeeping and beekeepers. TBA is an IRS 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization. This is a "social club" status, exempt from federal income taxes. There are plans being made to reincorporate as a 501(c)(5), nonprofit agricultural organization. Each year the TBA holds a summer clinic and an annual convention focused on learning opportunities for beekeepers. They represent Texas beekeepers in Austin, promote the Texas Honey Queen program and the Texas Master Beekeeper program. They also support the TAMU apiculture program and the honey bee lab. Individuals may join TBA and benefit from event discounts and receive the bi-monthly TBA Journal. Association membership is also available to gain TBA support for club programs, etc.

The TBA also includes subsidiary organizations. The Texas Honey Bee Education Association is a 501 (c)(3) educational and charitable nonprofit organization that supports such activities as the Honey Queen program and Hurricane Harvey Relief. Real Texas Honey™ is another TBA program that promotes Texas honey as a premium product.

Our meeting concluded with a customary drawing for various donated door prizes.

Time to letgo

Don't miss the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or, if you have stuff that needs a new home, it may be time to *letgo*.

Treasurer's Report

Our April treasury balance was \$3,767.99. Since our last report we collected \$100 in donations, \$80 in dues, and \$250 in mentee enrollments. We spent \$149.33 for flowers for Elton Reynold's funeral service, \$11.72 for batteries for our PA system and \$428.40 for twenty copies of the The Beekeepers Handbook for our mentoring program. The resulting balance is \$3,608.54, consisting of \$3,553.54 in our checking account plus \$55.00 in cash to make change.

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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