



East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 27 No. 10

October 4, 2012

October Report by Dick Counts

We had another great attendance at the August meeting with 93 members and guests present. Thank you for sharing your time, your knowledge and experience, and your contributions to the snack table! It all works together to make ETBA one of the most consistently active bee clubs in Texas.

ETBA has always focused on public outreach to promote an interest in beekeeping. We do this in several ways -- with our presentations to clubs, church groups and organizations, through our Queen and Princess activities, and through our booth at fairs and festivals around East Texas. But even an old-timer like me can't help but notice that we have developed an effective outreach on the Internet. When President Gus introduces the visitors and asks how they learned about ETBA, most of them are now saying that they found us on the Internet.

At the time I am writing this article, we are in the middle of the East Texas State Fair. Our booth has been staffed by 33 different members! We have shared the bee story with over 1100 school children and constant stream of adults. Honey sales have been good and the beeswax creams and lip balms have been a hit with women visitors. Of course, the big attention getter is our observation hive, always fascinating to children and adults.

Last month, I mentioned that we were sending Texas A&M a sample of honey that was crystallized in the frame. We received the results of their analysis. They sent us a very detailed multi-page report that essentially had one conclusion and one speculation. The conclusion was that the honey had no abnormal findings other than a very low pollen content. The speculation was that the bees had been eating sugar and mixing it with some naturally gathered nectar. The beekeeper who brought the sample did not feed sugar syrup after the supers were on.

IMPORTANT -- We will now be meeting at the United Methodist Church in Whitehouse. TJC is renovating Room 104 into four small classrooms and it is no longer available for use. See the last page of the newsletter for information about our new meeting space and driving instructions. See you there, same time, **new place!**

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—Tammy Lenamond

Secretary—Karen Anderson

Ex. Director and Reporter—
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford
Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joe
Mekalip, Gus Wolf

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

October 4

**United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse
6:45 PM**



On the Web: etba.info

Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789

HONEY QUEEN REPORT by *Vi Bourns*



Our Honey Princess Hayden Wolf is in Pennsylvania, spending some time with her grandmother. As a true Honey Princess would do, she located a beekeeping club, some teaching charts, and some school children for a bee presentation! She will share her experiences with you in the next newsletter.

As I announced at the last meeting, Queen Bekah will step aside from her position as queen to pursue a heavy school schedule and some college classes her senior year. She also will be extremely active in a 4-H program that has the potential of earning a college scholarship. She graciously said if we need her sometime, she will try to be there for us.

For 2013, Hayden Wolf has agreed to be ETBA Honey Queen and Martha Jeske will be our Honey Princess.



Hello East Texas Beekeepers! As fall is fast approaching and the weather is finally cooling off, your Royal Honey Court is getting ready for some of the biggest events of the year! This week I will be in our ETBA booth at the East Texas State Fair in Tyler, talking to and educating elementary students in all things bee! I'm so excited to do this again this year. This is my third time to participate at the East Texas Fair and my second to go as your Honey Queen. I enjoy fairs and festivals such as this one because they are a great way to tell the public about our club and great for meeting potential new beekeepers!

Also coming up is the State Fair of Texas, one of the most anticipated events of the year if you're a honey queen or princess! Be sure to go by the TBA booth if you attend the fair and support the queens and princesses from all over our state as they give their educational talks and cooking demonstrations!

My hives are doing well, and I hope you can say the same! I can't wait to see each of your smiling faces at our next meeting. See you then and God bless. ~Bekah

Welcome East Texas Beekeepers Association from the congregation of Whitehouse United Methodist Church

Jesus said to Simon Peter in Matt 5:10, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people". Jesus was talking to Peter and the other disciples about how to fish. Jesus spent several years instructing his disciples how to catch people for the kingdom of God. He taught them the knowledge they needed to pass on to others to fulfill their mission on earth.

Very soon we, as the church, will be welcoming ETBA to our facilities. They will meet in the fellowship hall. I am so excited about their coming. As I was thinking about my fellow beekeepers, it occurred to me that ETBA is very proficient at making beekeepers, or "bee catchers". ETBA trains new beekeepers in the art of beekeeping. Every meeting is opened with a pledge to the U.S. flag and a prayer. Then we discuss and educate each other and new members about the bee or we have a guest speaker. Our Honey Queen and Princess educate people all around the East Texas area in schools, churches, garden clubs and other clubs to create awareness about the importance of God's honey bee to our lives.

In essence, the club members and the royal court share the good news about bees like we are commanded to share the good news about Jesus in Matt 28. ETBA makes beekeeping disciples by teaching others how to catch and take care of the bee, thus sharing the joy of what it means to follow the bee as we follow Jesus. Dick Counts teaches classes about bees, and hands-on building of the hives. The members actually go out and work them, and invite others to experience the joy of beekeeping.

This revelation came to me at one of the club meetings. I began to ask myself, "What if the church could make disciples for Jesus like ETBA makes beekeeping disciples?" They are hands-on, education-and mission-based, and simply love the little bee!

One of my favorite things to do in beekeeping is to catch swarms. People call, and you drop what you are doing and go collect the swarm. Catching people for Jesus, like catching a swarm of bees, requires knowledge, and actual hands on experience with the bee. One doesn't get to be a good beekeeper by just observing, but by working and learning about a bee's life. Perhaps you and I are in training to go catch people. All the classroom time will never be enough to catch people. We have to actually go out and collect them. It is in that environment that we learn how to catch people. Welcome ETBA and God bless you, ~Pastor Matt Thomas



President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

It really didn't turn out the way I had intended. As a matter of fact, it was the exact opposite of what I wanted and expected. But if I had really paid attention and thought about it, I would not have been caught so completely by surprise. Just one little mistake and now I am a beekeeper without any bees! Well, that does not include the two queens sitting on my desk, ready for hives that now don't exist. I'll bet you are wondering what happened. So did I at first, and then it all made sense and I learned something new, once again the hard way.

About six weeks ago, we had two hives. Hayden had a hive which was a survivor since our first year of beekeeping. Graeme had a large swarm that he caught at the Alert Golf Course early in the summer. Both have been doing well and, as I said last month, gave us about three gallons of honey this year. Since we are still in a drought, I have been feeding both hives. A few weeks ago, we caught a small swarm in Gladewater and it was doing well in a nuc box, with capped brood and a slowly growing colony. We had high hopes for this hive for next year.

When we took the frames out of Hayden's hive to extract, they were as gentle as could be and barely bothered us as we stole what they had labored so hard to produce! When we put the boxes back on the hive, they were just as gentle. A couple of weeks ago, I went up to her hive to install a Boardman feeder and give them a gallon of syrup. Remembering they were gentle when we extracted, I wore a bee jacket, jeans and loafers with black socks. When I took the top off, out they poured and they were not happy. It took them about 30 seconds to find my black socks and four bees gave up their lives on the instep of my right foot. Back to the house I went to don boots and trousers to finish the job. I should have realized then that something was amiss.

With two hives doing reasonably well, I decided on a Fall split and ordered two queens which arrived Wednesday of last week. Saturday was to be the day we split and Sunday I was to "introduce" the new queens. Upon reaching Graeme's hive, I knew something was amiss. There were way too many bees around the entrance. The nuc hive box was empty with just a few bees, a cow killer and a lot of yellow jackets. Two days previous, all was well and everything was in its place. Graeme's hive, too, was empty except for all the robber bees that had cleaned it out. No pollen, no nectar, no honey, little brood and another cow killer. Frightfully, Hayden's hive was more of the same – empty. No bees at all, just lots of hive beetles looking for a free meal.

Now the only bees I have are the hiveless queens and their attendants that are straining to get out of the little wooden box that they have been in for a week.

Hopefully, that will be corrected later today as I may acquire a hive that can be split into two nucs. I am hoping they will do well for the winter and are ready to split again next year, as long as I don't make the same mistake again.

What was the little mistake I made? It had to do with the two-to-one syrup that I gave the bees. I added a drop of essential oil to each gallon to make it more attractive to them. You do the same thing with the product called "Honey Bee Healthy." Only I put in the wrong oil – the one that is insanely attractive to bees – and I precipitated a robbing frenzy from a stronger local hive. It caused mine to abscond. I don't think I'll be making that mistake again! What was the oil? See if you can figure it out, or ask me at the meeting. I am more than happy to share my foibles with you so that you don't do the same thing!

Don't forget that October is Auction Month! This will be the first Auction/Raffle since June. Bring all of your treasures for the Auction, your bee junk for the Raffle, and your money to buy it back again!

See you at the Whitehouse United Methodist Church next Thursday!

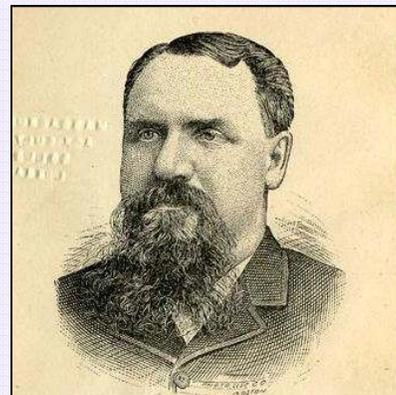


Gilbert DooLittle



In the August newsletter, I wrote about Moses Quinby, inventor of the smoker and father of commercial beekeeping. This month, I'd like to share with you about another famous beekeeper of the past, Gilbert M. DooLittle, born in 1846. When he was seven years old, his father helped a neighbor collect a swarm from the neighbor's property.

Mr. DooLittle recalled those bees fondly; "I remember, almost as if it were yesterday, how animated I was. I was often out by the hive to see if I could catch a glimpse of some of the inmates." The young boy was captivated with the idea of swarms and pestered his father with questions about them. Ecstatic when the first swarm issued and was captured, he eagerly watched the bees enter the hive, and even saw the queen. As the years passed, the number of his father's hives multiplied, until an epidemic of foul-brood killed the entire apiary.



During the next several years, Gilbert DooLittle had little contact with bees. But this would soon change. The fall he was twenty-two, Gilbert cut his foot so badly that he had to spend the entire winter housebound. During this time, he read "King's Beekeeper's Textbook," which sparked a self-confessed "bee-fever". This fever led him to explore Langstroth's "The Hive and the Honey Bee" and Moses Quinby's "The Mysteries of Bee-keeping Explained." He also subscribed to the American Bee Journal.

That spring, he began beekeeping in earnest. He purchased two hives and collected a swarm. The following summer, he visited a local queen-rearing man, and the two formed a partnership. For the next year, his friend reared the queens while Gilbert sold and installed them. Afterwards, he began queen-rearing with his own stocks. He started by forcing queens to lay in tiny boxes, even smaller than our current-day nucs, but the quality of these queens didn't satisfy him. So he began experimenting.

After testing and modifying several different methods of queen-rearing over many years, Gilbert DooLittle finally found the most successful way to produce high-quality queens. This method used wax queen cups, small cup-like structures which serve as the base of a queen cell. In each queen cup, he would place a drop of royal jelly and a young larva from the colony with the most desirable queen. He then would use wax to glue each cup, face down, onto a wooden bar, which he would install onto the middle of a frame. This frame would be put into a queenless colony, encouraging the bees to continue building the cells with their own wax. Once the bees finished, any capped queen cells could be installed into queenless hives or sold for profit. Most queen-rearing beekeepers today use some form of this method.



Throughout his life, Mr. DooLittle wrote about his observations. Many of his articles were published in "bee papers" and later compiled and issued in two books, "The Hive I Use" and "Rearing Queens". In 1889, he published "Scientific Queen-rearing as Practically Applied", his first major work. This book contains wonderful information about queen-rearing, breeding, and shipping, all written in a conversational style. You can read a free copy of this book at the following website - <http://www.bushfarms.com/beesdoolittle.htm> - or purchase a copy edited by Dr. Larry Connor at Amazon.com. Later, in 1908, Mr. DooLittle wrote his final book, "A Year's Work in an Out-Apiary," about section comb honey and bee management. A copy of this book, also edited by Dr. Connor, is available on Amazon.com as well. Gilbert M. DooLittle passed away in 1918, leaving behind the most effective method of queen-rearing we know today. ~Martha

October is Auction/Raffle month



Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley

I was observing the landing boards of five hives and a five-frame NUC around 6PM last Thursday evening. A steady stream of bees was arriving on the landing board and going into the hive. Some were carrying loads of pollen and others had nothing showing. As they disappeared into the hive, a continual stream of bees was making a hasty exit and flying off for another load of nectar and pollen before it became too dark.

If you have received recent moisture in the past couple of weeks, there should be a bloom of fall flowers for your bees to use as a forage source. These fall flowers could be a viable source of nectar and pollen from now until frost (usually early to mid-November). Some of the fall flowers are obvious, like the large stands of Goldenrod in fields and road-sides. Others are less obvious and easy for us to overlook but the bees will find them. Watch the activity at the front of your hive. If you see pollen-laden bees coming in, the hive may have a good natural forage to build up adequate stores to prosper during the winter. If you see little being brought in, you may need to provide some supplemental feeding using sugar syrup. Checking the weight of the hive or looking into the hive for stored honey will give you an indication of whether supplemental feeding is needed.

Your bees will begin to act differently now that we are having some cooler weather. They will not beard on the landing board or the face of the hive as they did in the summer. They also will be slower to leave the hive early in the day, particularly after a cool night. Sometimes, you may see a change in the temperament of the bees. Hives that have been easy to work may start acting more aggressive when you open the cover. Just because you see fewer bees on the outside of the hive, don't think that there are fewer bees inside the boxes. It is always a good idea to give the bees a little smoke before you open the cover. Don't be fooled into thinking that hive population may be lowered and open the box without proper protection.

Within the next few weeks, we should expect drones to be expelled from the hive. You could be greeted by a pile of dead or dying bees on the ground outside of the hive. No, your hive is not dying, just preparing itself for the coming winter. Do take a moment to check and make sure that the dead and dying bees are indeed drones.

If you have a weakened hive (only three or four frames of bees and brood), now is a good time to combine it with a stronger hive to improve its chances of surviving the winter. First, make sure that the weak hive is not overrun with beetles or moths or has evidence of disease. If it looks OK, you can combine the two hives using the newspaper method. Place a sheet of newspaper on top of the strong hive and make a couple of 2-inch slits with your hive tool. Set the box with the three or four frames on top of the newspaper and close up the hive. By the time the bees chew through the newspaper, they will be accustomed to each other's scent and peacefully join as one hive. You can then shake or smoke all of the bees into the original box and remove the box with the 3 or 4 frames. When I use this method, I like to put a 6 or 8 penny nail on top of the newspaper near the corners of box. This allows a little ventilation into the top box until the bees can chew the newspaper. Place the nails on the front and back edge to discourage the box from rolling out of alignment.

I read about and even have tried another technique used by beekeepers in New Zealand for combining 3 or 4 frames with another hive without using some type of separator that the bees must chew through. This technique involves masking the scent of the bees and allows you to take frames from one hive and add them to another hive without having to come back and remove the newspaper and extra box. The New Zealand beekeeper sprayed aerosol air freshener on the frames taken from one hive and also sprayed it into the box where the frames were going to be added. In my experiment, I sprayed the frames and hive with the air freshener Oust. All I can say is that combining of the hives was successful and the Oust did not seem to harm the bees. If you are concerned about spraying air freshener because of the solvents and chemicals, you could probably achieve the same results with a spray bottle of diluted lemongrass or peppermint oil or perhaps even sugar water. If you try this technique, share your experience, good or bad, at the next meeting.

If you have not already done so, it would be a good idea to put entrance reducers on your hives. Entrance reducers help control robbing from other bees and Yellow Jackets by narrowing the entrance that the hive bees must defend. If you are in an area with a lot of field mice, add mouse guards or entrance reducers with a very small opening.

I will be at the meeting early. Look for me in the Question Corner, 6:00 to 6:30 before the meeting. If you have beekeeping questions, I will try to answer them.



Beekeepers have differing opinions about using Inner Covers. Some regard the Inner Cover as an essential part of the hive structure. It allows the beekeeper to remove the Telescoping Outer Cover to feed syrups or pollen substitutes without completely exposing the hive, particularly in colder weather when heat loss needs to be avoided. Other beekeepers view the Inner Cover as an optional addition to the hive. Some even express concern that the inner cover impedes ventilation and makes more hiding places for beetles and moths.

The Inner Cover is designed to provide proper “bee space” above the frame topbars. Without an Inner Cover, bees tend to bridge the space between the frame topbars and the Outer Cover with burr comb and propolis. This build up can make removal a little difficult. If the Outer Cover is removed periodically, however, the periodic removal helps keep the wax buildup in check.

Stan Brantley recently had an opportunity to see what happens when hives without Inner Covers are not opened for a long time. Alta Porter, widow of ETBA member Lonnie Porter, asked Stan to see if there was any honey that could be extracted from Lonnie’s hives. Alta could not remember when the hives were last opened but guessed it to be more than a year.

The process started normally, attempting to pry up the Telescoping Outer Cover with a hive tool. It quickly became obvious that a hive tool was not going to loosen the Outer Cover. Fortunately, Stan had a special tool for removing stuck Outer Covers.



After a few light applications of the Specialized Outer Cover Removal Tool, the process began to degenerate in this manner:

Whap. “Please put some smoke in the entrance.”

WHAP. “Give them a little more smoke”.

WHAP! WHAP! “Smoke ‘em again!”

WHAP WHAP WHAP. “They’re coming out back here!

Hit ‘em with that smoke!! More over here!”



WHAP WHAP WHAP “Ouch, that one got me right on the back!” By the time the Outer Cover came loose, you can visualize two men in a cloud of smoke and agitated bees.

You can see the propolis and wax that had formed on the topbars. We scraped them clean and put a couple of twigs on the topbars to keep the bees from sealing the cover down again. Hopefully, removing it will be easier next time. And for a “lesson learned”, I now carry a Specialized Outer Cover Removal Tool in my bee box!

Effective October 4, we will meet at the United Methodist Church in Whitehouse. Meeting time remains unchanged. Our formal meeting starts at 6:45, with the Question Corner available at 6:00. Our ending time will revert to 9:00 since no one will be rushing us out of the room.

The church’s address is 405 West Main St (Hwy 346) just four blocks west of the intersection of 346 and 110. We will be meeting in the Friendship Hall at the back of the church. After you turn into the parking lot, drive to the back of the lot to park. There may be some Girl Scouts using the front part of the parking lot. Drive slowly and watch for children.

Whitehouse has several places to eat, including bar-b-que for those accustomed to gathering at Rudys before the meeting. Most restaurants are located along 110 before you reach the intersection with 346.

Members coming in from north and east of Tyler may want to take the east Loop 323 to HWY 110 (Troup highway). Follow 110 into Whitehouse and turn right at the intersection with 346.

Members coming from the south on HWY 69 will turn off 69 onto 346 and follow it right to the church.

Members coming from the west can take Loop 323 either east around to 110 or west around to 69. If you don’t want to bother with traffic through Tyler, you can go west on the loop and turn right on Old Jacksonville Highway, follow it to the 4-way stop in Flint, hang a left on 346 and follow it into Whitehouse.