From the President

Here it is October already! Every year I am amazed at how quickly the time passes. We beekeepers are a busy bunch, and this year we’ve been especially so, with a honey harvest for the record books! I hope that your bees are fat and happy after this wonderful season. Now to get ready for winter…

We had some great outdoor meetings again this year, with many members attending. Thanks again to all of our hosts for allowing us to gather at your beautiful homes. We learned some important techniques for managing our hives through the challenges of the season. Mites are a bigger problem every year and we remind everyone to be vigilant, test and treat promptly when the numbers are high.

Our Spencer Fair booth was busy as ever this year. A huge thanks to the 65 volunteers who donated their time and energy to make it a success, especially the folks who came on multiple days. We could not do it without you! Congratulations to this year’s Best of Show Honey winner Martha Williams who takes home the silver bowl for her beautiful honey. And to Barb MacPhee for winning Best of Show Baking with her scrumptious apple pie. And to Val Fisk who once again took home the prize for Best of Show Photography. Thanks also to everyone who entered the honey show—there were some really impressive items submitted for the honey, wax, crafts, baking and photo contests. Whenever I see what others have done with products of their hives, I feel inspired to try new things.

Now that the outdoor season is behind us, I hope you will join us for our indoor meetings. We kicked off the season on October 5 with a great set of lectures by Reed Johnson of Ohio State University and Heather Mattila of Wellesley College. Our next event is the Thanksgiving Banquet on November 2 which is coming up QUICK so please get your reservation to us very soon and make sure to join us for this fun evening! We’ll have teacup and goodie basket raffles (please bring your donations of bee-related items and goodies!), awards, of course a delicious turkey dinner, and a presentation by photographer and bee inspector Paul Tessier. At this gathering we will also have nominations for our officers and 2 director positions which will be voted in January. On December 7 we’ll celebrate the end of 2019 with a holiday party at Leo’s Ristorante complete with buffet and Yankee swap. Then we’ll kick off 2020 with a chef supper and our Annual Meeting on January 10. I hope you can join us for these upcoming events!

Hope to see you soon, and bee well!

—Kathy
NOTES & TIPS FROM THE BEE INSPECTOR

Trials & Tribulations

It was early March, after realizing I had lost 39 of my 115 colonies when I went to my bookcase, dug out and dusted off my dad’s intensive bee diaries that span from 1947-1984 when he passed away. I sat down near the fireplace and for the next 4 hours read through his diaries. I soon realized for the first time that the hobby of beekeeping is a series of trials and tribulations. Some years have more trials than tribulations and other years more tribulations, but always some of both.

The opening page was a 1947 Worcester County Beekeepers group picture from the July meeting in West Boylston showing 37 men and 3 ladies. It was certainly a male hobby back then. My dad came to America in 1946 from Poland after the war and started beekeeping here in 1947 with the help of Warren Richardson, a bee dealer in Worcester.

I then started reading various passages in the diaries realizing the trials and tribulations of beekeeping on an annual basis. He writes in 1958, it was a banner year when he averaged over 100+ pounds of honey from his 50 colonies and how thrilled he was. Then in 1962 he was bewildered at his 15 percent losses when the average back then was mostly between 5-10 percent, a figure we would be thrilled with. Reading into it, I could tell he was blaming himself for doing things wrong and searching for reasons. A 1966 passage talks about the worst honey year he had, averaging only 20 pounds of honey from his 50 hives. Then in 1971, he refers to the worst swarming year he had seen here in America, losing over 15 swarms even with swarm prevention. One of the passages brought tears to my eyes where he refers to giving his oldest son Kenneth his first hive in 1955 for his 5th birthday. This was a day that I have never forgotten and that picture of he and I is on the front cover of the Worcester County cookbook. I think back to all of the trials and tribulations we went through the years of keeping bees together. A devastating 1956 passage about having to burn 15 hives caused by buying a diseased honey super with AFB spores from another beekeeper. Never again he says!

After reading 4 hours of my dad’s diaries I came to realize that there are many trials and better accepted losing all those colonies even though I thought I did everything that I could. Nature and environment has greater control—and that we cannot control that no matter how hard we try. Our management is important but nature has the final say. I then thought of the years after my dad’s passing realizing that the challenges in beekeeping are even greater than back then—varroa, tracheal mites, small hive beetle, chalkbrood and more viruses, which caused me to take a little weight off of my shoulders for last winter’s devastating losses which brings me to this season.

The spring season was long and wet and cold until May. However, the colonies had started brood rearing in December this year after ending brood rearing in early October last fall. The weather turned warm in mid May and the strong colonies were ready with swarm cells. And from mid May to the end of June we faced an intense swarm season and even with me and my two helpers doing...
**2019 WINNERS**

**SPENCER FAIR**

**Honey**

Best Light Honey
1st  Brian Faucher
2nd  Reagan Girouard
3rd  Roland Sevigny

Best Light Amber Honey
1st  Martha Williams*  
2nd  Ann Lenault  
3rd  Roland Sevigny

Best Amber Honey
1st  Reagan Girouard
2nd  Brian Faucher
3rd  Roland Sevigny

Best Dark Amber Honey
1st  Norman Mercier
2nd  Martha Williams
3rd  Thomas Flynn

Best Dark Honey
1st  Norman Mercier

**Honeycomb**

Best Shallow Cut Honeycomb
1st  Cindy Lenault

**Honey Frames**

Best Shallow Frame of Honey
1st  Roland Sevigny
2nd  Norman Mercier

Best Medium Frame of Honey
1st  Roland Sevigny
2nd  Sergio & Johnna Bacelis

**Beeswax**

Articles made of Beeswax
1st  Claude Booth

Pair Straight, Plain, Tapered, Molded Candles
1st  Claude Booth

Pieces of Beeswax–2 or More Pounds
1st  Martha Williams
2nd  Claude Booth

**Honey Beverages**

Still Mead
1st  Ann Lenault
2nd  Harvey Blithe
3rd  Linda Davis

**Crafts & Gadgets**

Craft Related to Beekeeping
1st  Cindy Lenault
2nd  Harvey Blithe
3rd  Martha Williams

**Baking**

100% Honey
1st  Harvey Blyth
2nd  Martha Williams

Creamed Honey
1st  Cindy Lenault
2nd  John Hedly
3rd  Patricia Sevigny

Soft Cookies
1st  Cindy Lenault
2nd  John Hedly
3rd  Patricia Sevigny

Cake
1st  Patricia Sevigny

Yeast Bread
1st  Patricia Sevigny

Quick Bread
1st  Barbara MacPhee
2nd  Patricia Sevigny
3rd  John Hedly

Pie
1st  Barbara MacPhee**
2nd  John Hedly
3rd  Patricia Sevigny

Candy
1st  Dianna Provencher
2nd  Barbara MacPhee

Bars or Brownies
1st  Dianna Provencher

Muffins
1st  Barbara MacPhee
2nd  Martha Williams

**Photography**

Single Photo
1st  Valerie Fisk†
2nd  Bonita Booth
3rd  Sergio Bacelis

Photo Essay
1st  Valerie Fisk
2nd  Paulette White
**CALL FOR THANKSGIVING RAFFLE ITEMS**

Once again we will be raffling off 4 baskets full of Thanksgiving goodies at the November banquet. Barbara has graciously offered to arranged the baskets again this year and is in need of help filling them. We will need 4 of each item (one for each basket). If you are interested in donating items please contact Barbara MacPhee at (508) 829-4556 or brmacphee@aol.com.

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**Saturday | November 2 | Thanksgiving Banquet**

**Leicester Knights of Columbus, 5:00 PM**

**FAMILY STYLE DINNER:** 6:00 PM  
Celebrate with a fresh turkey dinner with all the fixins’, dessert, coffee & tea.  
Board nominations for open positions will also be taken.

**SPEAKER:**  
PAUL TESSIER: The Wildlife of Africa  
An apiary inspector here in Massachusetts, Paul is a professional photographer and has traveled around the world photographing wildlife. Join us to celebrate Thanksgiving and the bountiful honey harvest we got this year.

**AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS:** Presentations for Beekeeper of the Year, Honey Queen, Spencer Fair Winners, and Appreciation will be made.

**TEACUP RAFFLE:** Bring a gift from the garden, the kitchen or the hive, a handmade craft, some bee equipment, a gift certificate or even a bottle of spirits for the raffle.

Replies must be received by October 26. See the reservation form on page 7.

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**Saturday | December 7 | Holiday Party**

**Leo’s Ristorante, 11 Brackett Court (off Shrewsbury St), Worcester, MA, 5:00 PM**

Relax and kick off the holiday season wining, dining with your fellow beekeepers.

**COCKTAIL HOUR:** 5:00 PM

**BUFFET DINNER:** 6:00 PM  
Rolls, antipasto, various Italian dishes, dessert, coffee & tea

**YANKEE SWAP:** Bring a $10 gift to swap with your fellow beekeepers.

Replies must be received by November 29th. See the reservation form on page 7.
Friday | January 10 | Chef Supper

Knights of Columbus, Leicester, 6:30 PM

A-I — Main Course  J-R — Vegetable / Side  S-Z — Dessert

Join us for our chef supper! Bring a dish big enough to serve 10, based on the first letter of your last name (see above). Please remember to bring your own tableware.

Ken will do a short program entitled “Keeping Your Hives Alive Through the Winter Season” to help us support our bees into the start of spring. January’s meeting will also serve as the WCBA’s annual meeting.

Friday | February 7

Knights of Columbus, Leicester, 6:30 PM

Ken, our tireless Program Director, is working on arranging an exciting speaker for February’s meeting so stay tuned!

Directions to the Leicester Knights of Columbus

Monthly Meetings and many of the Special Events of the WCBA are held at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Manville Street, in Leicester, Massachusetts.

From Webster Square in Worcester: Follow Route 9 West into Leicester. Two miles from the town line turn right onto Manville Street, just after Entwhistle’s Garage. Entrance to the Knights of Columbus is 1/2 mile up on your left.

From the Spencer or Leicester area: Follow Route 9 East. Turn left onto Manville Street, just before Entwhistle’s Garage. Entrance to the Knights of Columbus is 1/2 mile up on your left.

RECOGNIZING OUR 2019 ALL STAR MENTORS

At the WCBA’s September meeting, thirty-two of WCBA’s finest Beekeepers were recognized as club All-Star Mentors. Each mentee described how their mentor has helped them develop their beekeeping skills. It is clear that each All-Star Mentor has gone above and beyond to help them and the club. We are very fortunate to have such talented and caring beekeeping mentors as part of the WCBA.

If you have had an outstanding and dedicated bee mentor any time during the past 4-5 years, we would like to hear from you. Write a 2-3 paragraph recommendation explaining why your mentor should be recognized by the WCBA. You can send your letter to Ken Warchol (kenwarchol2@msn.com). Our WCBA mentors are doing a great service for our club.

Robert LeClair  Dean Hillman  Kevin Rudat  Tom Jango  Martha Williams
John Ostroskey  Mary Duane  Paula Morency  Ned Sawyer  Ken Warchol
Kathy Zwarich  Gerry Maurais  Gary Fischer  Scott Herbert  Joel Jette
Tony Howe  Mark Lantzczak  Laura Kurzantowski  Bob Harrington  Kathy Harrington
Peter Hoffman  Greg Caless  Gerry Gross  Kathy Harrington
Mark Breton  Doug Partridge  Brian Hegarty  Eli Laverdiere
Angela Hogue  Mary Partridge  Kevin Provost  Dave Lewcon

WorcesterCountyBeekeepers.com
Ken’s Sugar Patty Tips

Take sugar and water and mix it into a paste consistency and make a meatball and then flatten it on waxpaper into an 8 inch patty about ¼ inch thick so the bees can warm it up easily. Place it on the frames overlapping the bee cluster by an inch overlap. If you trapped fresh pollen, press it into the sugar patty and the bees will thank you. If any questions then contact me at 508-680-3440 or KenWarchol2@msn.com

intense swarm management, I still lost 13 swarms and increased my hive numbers from 101 to 135 making splits and what I call, super hives, by adding a queen to a split with 8-10 frames of brood. These built up quickly and were honey producers within 2 weeks. This was one of the heaviest swarm season I have seen, especially after last season’s low swarm season. The swarm season coincided with a nectar flow the likes of which I have not seen in 20 years. I saw the colonies on my scale hives add 16-18 pounds of nectar in one day. I had to add another super to my hives within a week. Most of my hives had 4 honey supers on by late July when we usually get a dearth. However, the dearth never came and the nectar flow continued and continued, right up until the third week of September. I then knew that it was over as the bees were now trying to get into my honey house to find honey. This behavior has always been my guide to judging honey flows and dearths. My wife and I are still extracting having finished the light honey and now working on spinning out the dark honey. This type of year my dad called the banner years, when both the spring, summer and fall flows were out of the norm. This was certainly one of those years with over a 90 pound average. The banner years only come around every 15-20 years looking at my dad’s diaries. New beekeepers you came into the hobby in a banner year.

There are still the trials to face of keeping our bees alive through the winter season. The mite numbers in my hives are now on the high side again after treating with mitewax in early August. One of the trials of beekeeping is keeping the numbers of these critters on the low side, a key for winter survival. I have also left a full super of honey for the bees which is much more nutritious than sugar syrup. We cannot be greedy as beekeepers but must think of our bees. You must evaluate your queen to make sure you have a vibrant queen laying brood in September and October to provide the colony young bees for overwintering. Evaluate your ventilation in the colony to avoid excessive moisture. Be sure your hive is tipped slightly forward to avoid melting snow going into your hive. Place wind barriers in front of hives in very windy areas. Close up screen bottom boards to avoid a wind tunnel into your bee cluster. You may choose to wrap, but not overwrap. Finally, monitor your hives weekly for food stores so they do not starve during a tough, cold winter. Be sure to put in your entrance and mouse guards by the middle of October.

Remember that you have a lot to do with your colony’s destiny but nature has an even greater control and do not blame yourself if you did everything you could for your bees and you lose them. I have finally come to grips with my last winter’s losses and worked even harder on my winter preparations this year. Remember, you and your bees are partners and that is why we love them. They do so much for us and we should do the same for them. Like my dad used to say, the bees are number 1. Enjoy the hobby with all its trials and tribulations.

Best in beekeeping, Ken
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL | Deadline is December 31 for 2020 membership

Dues are $15 annually. Mail this form in or renew at any of the club functions or meetings.

NAME (please print) ________________________________________________________________

STREET ________________________________________________________________

CITY, STATE ZIP ____________________________________________________________

PHONE ________________________________________________________________

EMAIL ________________________________________________________________

Please make your check out to WCBA and mail to: WCBA, P.O. Box 415, Northborough, MA 01532

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2 | Thanksgiving Banquet Reservation

_____ Adults (13 and older) x $17 each= ____________

_____ Children (ages 6-12) x $8 each= ____________

_____ Children (5 and younger) FREE TOTAL ENCLOSED = $ ________________

NAME ________________________________________________________________

STREET ________________________________________________________________

CITY, STATE ZIP ____________________________________________________________

PHONE ________________________________________________________________

Your reservation payment should be received by October 26th. Make checks payable to WCBA and mail to: WCBA, P.O. Box 415, Northborough, MA 01532

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 | Christmas Party Reservation

$24.00 per person x ____________ Number Attending TOTAL ENCLOSED = $ ________________

NAME ________________________________________________________________

STREET ________________________________________________________________

CITY, STATE ZIP ____________________________________________________________

PHONE ________________________________________________________________

Your reservation payment should be received by November 29th. Make checks payable to WCBA and mail to: WCBA, P.O. Box 415, Northborough, MA 01532
Worcester County Beekeepers Association
c/o Kathy deGraaf
23 Edmunds Way
Northborough, MA 01532

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

THE DATE

Saturday | November 2, 2019
Thanksgiving Banquet (Leicester Knights of Columbus)

Saturday | December 7, 2019
Holiday Party (Leo’s Ristorante, Worcester, MA)

Friday | January 10, 2020
Chef Supper (Leicester Knights of Columbus)

Friday | February 7, 2020
Chef Supper (Leicester Knights of Columbus)

Saturday | March 7, 2020
All Day Meeting

DOES YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS NEED UPDATING?
If your membership is up-to-date but you are not receiving club emails (quarterly newsletters & important announcements), please contact our Membership Director, Angela Hogue, to update your email in our records.