

Stahlman beekeeping notes for 2021

Issue # 52 Looking Back at 2021

First, I would like to wish all of you a **VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS SEASON.**

It is always a bit sad for me to say goodbye to an old year! But I join all those new beekeepers in the joy of a new start. I will be involved again in teaching new beekeepers about my love for honeybees. I have been involved over that last month working with Wake County Beekeepers Association – trying to prepare for the bee school and future programs especially to address those beekeepers with a year or two of experience. I am not the kingpin, just one of the members supporting the over-all effort to make meetings more meaningful. It is interesting when a club talks about "we or our" rather than using the pronoun "I."

The purpose of writing these bee notes has been to share my thoughts on beekeeping issues.

In 1980, Herb Cohen wrote, "Theoretically, we may know that "no man is an island," but faced with the pressures of daily living, we tend to forget this interdependence." It is my hope that in 2022 all of us can remember that we are linked together by a very "socially unified super family of insects" where the rule seems to be – One for all and all for One.

Covid certainly will follow us into 2022! How it will affect us as beekeepers is not something we can see as of yet. But when I am in the bee yard, I don't think of the limitation of COVID. But on the other hand, I am viewing covid as a wake-up call on how to manage my bees. You will find me thinking about how I lay-out my bee yards this coming year. I did have a real problem with drought this past summer and fortunately, I am planning on improving that situation. Feeding a lot of sugar is not going to be my solution.

I also want to thank all of those who shared information and experience with me. At the top of my list are those who wrote to share their thoughts on what was in the notes. Along with them are five special students who allowed me into their bee yards. Those students gave me great insight into what other beekeepers were dealing with in their hives and bees.

In some way or other, you shared your island with me.

Fortunately, new beekeepers are taught to wear bee protective gear. A bee buddy and her husband decided they could work bees without protective gear. Off with the gloves and head protection.

This worked for several weeks with fairly weak hives but the day came when I got a call. 15 stings! "I am afraid of my bees!" That fixed going to work the bees without protective equipment.

I now advise anyone working bees to wear protective equipment until they feel comfortable removing gloves. I feel it is important to teach someone how to pick up a bee. It is not possible with gloves to handle queens or worker bees. Try picking up drones – they can't sting – then work on worker bees.

Several great topics for 2022 – handling worker bees, marking queens and wearing bee beards.

And by new beekeepers --



Long story short – I gave this young lady a small nuc that I was almost sure would not survive under my care. It not only survived but built into a fairly strong hive by mid-summer. I learned later that she was the star performer in her first grade class – telling anyone who would listen about "her" bees. I am rewarded in so many ways by students who want to visit my bee yard and volunteer to work with me. In this case, a father that shows so much interest in sharing his interest with his daughter.



A big swarm this spring took up residence in a new beekeeper's swarm trap! This swarm had a great laying queen and a ton of bees. This swarm filled the swarm trap and drew comb in the space under the frames. The main body of bees on frames with brood were moved to a hive 30 or so feet away from the location of the swarm trap.

The question came up, "How do we get all the foraging bees to move with the queen to the new location?" What an opportunity to teach honey bee biology first hand.

The answer was to leave the bait hive where it was. Collect the new drawn comb from under the deep frames – they had eggs and larva to raise a queen.

Result: A new beekeeper with a swarm (big one with a great queen), a split from the swarm that raised a new queen, and two packages of bees (3 pounds each) installed in new equipment. What a way to begin keeping bees!

Sometimes things just happen! Another new beekeeper I mentored put up a swarm trap as well. Nothing came to it but he is well on his way to overwintering several strong hives of bees. Beekeeping is so much fun when one can share the joy! I am truly blessed!

I put 2021 down as a very good year. I am still working bees and have reached the limit on how many hives I can care for. I have been able to complete a full year of Stahlman Beekeeping Notes for 2021. I look back over the years and wonder what this land will look like 100 years from now! I came from a family of beekeepers. My grandfather, dad, and uncle would be shocked to see the world of today.

I would like to leave you with a poem by Edgar A. Guest, called "The Old-Fashioned Pair."

The Old-Fashioned Pair

*'Tis a little old house with a squeak in the stairs,
And a porch that seems made for just two easy
chairs;
In the yard is a group of geraniums red,
And a glorious old-fashioned peony bed.
Petunias and pansies and larkspurs are there
Proclaiming their love for the old-fashioned pair.*

*Oh, it's hard now to picture the peace of the place!
Never lovelier smile lit a fair women's face
Than the smile of the little old lady who sits
On the porch through the bright days of summer
and knits.*

*And a courtlier manner no prince ever had
Than the little old man that she speaks of as
"dad."*

*In that little old house, there is nothing of hate;
There are old-fashioned things by an old-
Fashioned gate;*

*On the walls there are pictures of fine looking
men*

*And beautiful ladies to look at, and then
Time has placed on the mantel to comfort them
there.*

*The pictures of grandchildren, radiantly fair
Every part of the house seems to whisper of joy,
The laughter of children the old walls have
known,*

*And the joy of it stays, though the babies have
flown.*

*I am fond of that house and that old-fashioned
pair*

And the glorious calm that is hovering there.

*The riches of life are not silver and gold
But fine sons and daughters when we are grown
Old,*

*And I pray when the years shall have silvered
Our hair*

*We shall know the delights of that old-fashioned
Pair.*

I often think back to my grandfather who inspired and built the bridge I walk into 2022.

From our house to yours, Best wishes for 2022