



# SEMBA NEWS

Volume 15 Number 3 Newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Beekeepers' Association  
May/June 2005

## Upcoming Events

### Schoolcraft Bee Club Meeting:

Tues., May 3, 2005. (See below for details.)

### SEMBA State Fair Preparation Meeting:

Mon., June 13, 2005. (See page 1 for details.)

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## SCHOOLCRAFT BEE CLUB MEETING

When: Tuesday, May 3, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Schoolcraft College, Lower Waterman Center, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI

Program: "Constructing and Using Solar Wax Melters" Fritz Sanders and other beekeepers.

"How I Got Started in Beekeeping" (See program note)

*Refreshments are welcome*

## SCHOOLCRAFT BEE CLUB PROGRAM NOTE:

We have lined up several SEMBA beekeepers to tell their interesting stories about how they started beekeeping. We will be recording these stories and it is our goal to make these presentations a part of the SEMBA archives. If time permits, we will ask for other beekeepers in attendance to relate the events that led to their start as beekeepers. Over the course of the next year, we would like to get your story about how you got started.

## SEMBA STATE FAIR PREPARATION MEETING

When: Monday, June 13, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Schoolcraft College, Lower Waterman Center, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, MI

Program: Entering your honey and wax in the Michigan State Fair Competition, Dianne Tracy, Ph.D.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FEBRUARY SEMBA MEETING

Thirty-four SEMBA members enjoyed a potluck on Sunday, February 13, 2005 at Schoolcraft College

followed by a SEMBA business meeting and a program honoring past SEMBA presidents.

Ann Kerwin read the secretary's report which was approved. SEMBA treasurer, Mary Sutherland, gave the treasurer's report that showed a February 13<sup>th</sup> balance of \$8950.42. After approval of the treasurer's report, it was moved, seconded and approved to place \$5000.00 in a Certificate of Deposit.

The upcoming 67<sup>th</sup> SEMBA Beekeepers' Conference was discussed. Jilinda Molnar agreed to set up the potluck and Winn Harless and Alfred Luperico volunteered to assist.

The Michigan State Fair honey and beeswax competition was discussed. Several ideas to improve the SEMBA fair booth were advanced. Dianne Tracy, Ph.D. will present a workshop on state-fair displays at the SEMBA Beekeeping Conference.

An agreement has been reached by beekeepers and the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Food and Dairy Division (MDA-FDD) on regulations and guidelines for honey houses. An endorsement letter from SEMBA to be sent to MDA-FDD was approved.

It was announced that a 36 page booklet entitled *Starting and Keeping Bees in Michigan, Information and Suggestions for the Beginning Beekeeper*, written by Mary and Roger Sutherland, was near completion. A motion naming SEMBA as the publisher was approved. It is hoped that the booklet will be completed by April 2, 2005.

It was moved, seconded and approved to donate \$500.00 to the Fremont Area Foundation in memory of Ernie Groeb who died on February 9, 2005. Fremont Area Foundation will match the \$500.00 contribution so a total of \$1000.00 will be added to the Michigan Beekeepers' Association Research Fund. (See related article on Ernie Groeb)

Past SEMBA Presidents Dick Gerathy (1974-77), Ralph Alloway (1978-79 and 1986), Bill Sirr (1980-81 and 1987-88), Bob Kimball (1982-83), Dan Guthrie (1984-85), Dick Miller (1990-93), Ed Nowak (1994-95), Joe Peczynski (1996-97), and Jim Goodrich (1998-03) were honored. Specially designed hats were presented to past presidents and to Ron Forfinski, current SEMBA President. Frances Alloway, widow of Ralph Alloway, was awarded her husband's hat.

- R. Sutherland

### IN MEMORY OF ERNIE GROEB

Michigan beekeepers lost a good friend and great supporter of beekeeping with the death of Ernie Groeb. Ernie was born in 1936 in Clinton, Michigan and died February 9, 2005 after a five-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

In 1956, Ernie married Jeanne Hubbard in Onsted, Michigan. In 1959, he went to work for Hubbard Apiaries and later became part owner. In 1981 he, his wife Jeanne and two sons started Groeb Farms, Inc. with locations in Onsted, Michigan and Belleville, Florida. He lived to see this company become the largest honey packer in the United States. In addition to honey, Groeb Farms distributes many other food products. In 1999, Groeb Farms established "The Mill", a home center, hardware and feed store in Onsted.

Ernie is survived by his wife Jeanne, two sons and five grandchildren.

### OPEN-SCREENED BOTTOM BOARDS

I first tried screened bottom boards, with a tray under them, to catch the Varroa mites that fell from the bees. This worked to some extent. The problem I encountered was wax moths in the pans when I didn't empty them often enough.

Then I started making open-screen bottom boards with a slide-in piece of plywood underneath the screen. This setup works better for me than anything else that I have tried. I put the plywood in when I want to check for mites in the summer. After the check, I take it back out. In the late fall, I put it back in for the winter. I leave it in until the bees get their population built up in the spring.

I get very little swarming during the summer. The bees make lots of honey, but I find they are reluctant to store it in the bottom super—so, is the queen to lay eggs down there? No, so I reverse the supers all summer. In the fall the queen seems to lay more than normal. The bees seem to anticipate that they will need more bees to keep the cluster warm with the bottom open. Then I mess it all up for them and put the bottom back in.

I treated with four different kinds of mite medicine this year but still had way too many healthy mites falling after the bees clustered. Nothing that I tried worked as well as I would have liked. I felt that the Sucricide spray from Dadant worked best for me. It's a "real project" to treat with, but it does work. I just hope the ants develop a taste for Varroa mites around my hives.

I feel I got rid of about 25% of my mites with the screened bottom boards. It's doubtful if mites will build up a resistance to screened bottom boards, so I plan to make more this winter.

If you have any questions about open-screened bottom boards, see me at our next Schoolcraft Bee Club meeting.  
- Winn Harless

### FUNGUS PROVIDES VARROA RELIEF FOR BEES

A natural fungus could be a non-chemical alternative for beekeepers looking for ways to control the parasitic varroa mite, according to Agricultural Research Service scientists in Weslaco, Texas.

For several years, scientists in the ARS Beneficial Insects Research Unit at Weslaco have been looking for a natural organism that's harmless to bees but kills the mites.

New, non-chemical controls are needed because the mite has developed resistance to the only approved chemicals—fluvalinate and coumaphos—now used against varroa. Researchers looked at various organisms, tried different dosages and application methods, and conducted toxicity tests. Finally, they selected strains of the fungus *Metarhizium anisopliae* that proved highly pathogenic to the mites.

The potent fungus, which also kills termites, doesn't harm bees or affect queen reproduction. To test the fungus, the scientists coated plastic strips with dry fungal spores and placed them inside the hives. Since bees naturally attack anything entering their hives, they tried to chew the strips, thereby spreading the spores to the whole colony.

In field trials, once the strips treated with *M. anisopliae* were inside the hives, several bees quickly made contact with the spores. Within 5 to 10 minutes, all the bees in the hive were exposed to the fungus, and most of the mites on the bees died within three to five days. The fungus provided excellent control of varroa without impeding colony development or population size. Tests showed that *Metarhizium anisopliae* was as effective as fluvalinate even 42 days after application. The scientific team is now fine-tuning the strategy for transfer to producers.  
Source: *Michigan Farm News* January 15, 2005.

### BEEKEEPER'S CONTROL OF VARROA MITES AND TRACHEAL MITES

The Department of Agricultural Economics at Louisiana State University in cooperation with the USDA Agricultural Research Service is conducting an on-line survey of beekeepers' options for controlling Varroa mites and tracheal mites.

The survey will help USDA and LSU to determine:

- How much damage has been caused by Varroa mites and tracheal mites
- How beekeepers are dealing with Varroa mites and tracheal mites
- The economic value to beekeepers of new lines of honey bees for controlling mites

For these reasons USDA and LSU needs your help in completing the on-line survey.

Please, go to the survey website: [www.honeybeesurvey.com](http://www.honeybeesurvey.com) and complete the survey:

For questions call (225) 578-2721 or E-mail: [jwestra@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jwestra@agcenter.lsu.edu)

## SEMBA WEB PAGE UPDATE

Webmaster, Tom Lisk, has announced that SEMBA has changed its web host to Lunarpages.com. This change will enable SEMBA to more easily and efficiently send E-mail reminders to members and will add many new features not previously available with our former hosting company.

Tom is looking for ideas from our members to incorporate into our web site. We have an excellent internet web site now, but we can make it even better with your input. Send your ideas to Tom at: [tosk@sembabees.org](mailto:tosk@sembabees.org)

Members now can sign up for the mailing list themselves. If you have not received an E-mail within the past 30 days from "sembabees", we encourage you to sign up using the link below. This will also help keep the master E-mail address spreadsheet updated.

The link is: [sembabees.org/signup.html](http://sembabees.org/signup.html)

### THE GENESIS OF BEEKEEPING AT SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE (Part 3 of 3)

When the bees in the college apiary began to build up surplus stores of honey, many of the students needed to have the honey extracted, and again they asked if the college might help. (The cost of buying the necessary extracting equipment is very high especially if you have only one or two hives of honey to extract and would be using the equipment only once or twice a year.) A beekeeping club had organized by this time, so it was decided to form a Honey House Club (HHC) within the beekeeping club. Eight individuals, the beginning nucleus of the HHC, each contributed \$50.00 to purchase an extractor and other pieces of equipment. The question now was where to put this equipment? Once again, the college provided the answer--a remodeled two-car garage on campus located behind the original Child Care Center on Haggerty Road. In this garage, in the late 1960s, John Lesko of the Schoolcraft College Physics Department had created an Alternative Energy course laboratory and an arrangement was made with Mr. Lesko to use the space for extraction of honey in the summer when his students were not using the facility for energy experiments. Eventually the Alternative Energy course was phased out and HHC members completely remodeled the garage for honey extraction. The beekeepers applied for and met the licensing requirements for a honey house certified by the Food and Dairy Division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Participating beekeepers could now extract their honey in a state-approved honey house.

Most of the beekeepers using the honey house extracted honey from just one or two hives, averaging less than 100 pounds of honey each year. However, one member, Rocco Garritano of the Schoolcraft College Mathematics department, extracted several thousand pounds of honey each year for several years. (Incidentally, when Mr. Garritano died, Schoolcraft College was the benefactor of his entire

estate and the bee club was given all of his beekeeping equipment and supplies.) Each year, the honey house closed on November 1<sup>st</sup>, but one member, Walter Lockhart, Schoolcraft College Philosophy instructor, usually waited until after the closing to extract; thus due to the cold weather, he moved the equipment into his classroom on weekends to harvest his honey crop.

In 1991, when I retired from the Schoolcraft College Biology Department, the apiary was closed and the honey house was torn down. The HHC still exists in a new location; the apiary was relocated to an area behind the Newman House and was used to teach beginning beekeeping classes. When the Newman House property was sold, the apiary was moved to the E.L. Johnson Nature Center in Bloomfield Township where classes were conducted. Schoolcraft Bee Club is still active holding meetings and hosting workshops and other events throughout the year. The club co-sponsors an annual beekeeping conference attracting about 135 participants. On April 2, 2005, Schoolcraft College will host the conference for the 29<sup>th</sup> year. In appreciation of the generous support that Schoolcraft College has given to beekeepers, the bee club contributed \$1000.00 to the Schoolcraft College Foundation and the Sutherlands donated \$103,000 to be used in the construction of the VisTaTech Center.

Hopefully, I have provided some insight into how the college gained educationally and financially; the college, however, has gained monetarily in another way. In 1965, when the college was hiring faculty and staff for the second college year, each member of the first-year faculty was assigned a member of the second-year faculty to act as a "Big Brother" or "Big Sister" mentor by providing help and counsel. My assigned "Little Brother" was Leonard Stec a faculty member of the original culinary arts program. Leonard was the pastry chef in the Breithaupt culinary team headed up by Herman Breithaupt and later by Robert Breithaupt. Leonard's pastries were superb. One day, I suggested to him that he ought to substitute honey in place of sugar in some of his recipes. He agreed, so I brought him a five-gallon pail (sixty pounds) of honey to use. In appreciation, he offered me a torte, a large cake or some other great dessert. This arrangement continued for some time. Often the honey in the sixty-pound pails would crystallize (sugar) before it was completely used, so Leonard had to heat the honey to re-liquefy. After he described the problem, I brought honey in gallon containers that were easily emptied before the honey crystallized, and each time, he would offer me one of his deluxe pastries. Now instead of one pastry for a sixty- pound pail, I was receiving five times the number of treats. (Why had I not thought of that before?) For several years, until Leonard's retirement, we donated about 300 pounds of honey each year to the culinary arts program; the college gained monetarily and the pastries produced were improved with honey as an ingredient.

My years of teaching at Schoolcraft were most enjoyable and challenging. It was a great experience to be in on the ground floor where a number of new

innovations could be tried and to be an integral part of a growing institution. The honey bee enterprise that developed on the site now known as College Park was indeed a great experience. - R. Sutherland

### 67<sup>TH</sup> SEMBA BEEKEEPERS' CONFERENCE

An attendance of 168 SEMBA members and guests enjoyed another successful beekeeping conference held Saturday, April 2, 2005 in the VisTaTech Center at Schoolcraft College. Income from the event was \$1593.25, including: registration, \$1165.00; hive raffle, \$323.00; potluck, \$80.00; coffee, \$24.25; donation \$1.00.

Ideas and suggestions for next year's conference are always welcome, so while the event is still fresh in your mind, send your comments to the SEMBA officers:

Ronald Forfinski (810) 220-1084 or E-mail [forfinrl@nlbusa.com](mailto:forfinrl@nlbusa.com)  
Keith Lazar (248) 626-2483 or E-mail [keithmlazar@hotmail.com](mailto:keithmlazar@hotmail.com)  
Ann Kerwin (313) 861-5760 or E-mail [singinmike@aol.com](mailto:singinmike@aol.com)

#### SEMBA Bargain Corner

##### **Free:**

- Empty medium-depth supers and hive bodies. **Call Rick Katterman, (248)-669-9354.**

##### **For Sale:**

- New deep and medium supers, frames, bottom boards, inner/outer covers, new 1 and 5 gal. buckets with lids. **Call Keith Lazar, H (248) 626-2483, P (248)815-5522.**
- New deeps, shallows, frames, bottom boards, covers, all hive parts. **Call Robert Hollis, H. (810) 798-8084, cell (810) 338-1523**
- Limited number of Michigan-raised confirmed Italian and Carniolan laying queens. **Call Paul Mazur (810) 686-9882** for prices and details.

##### **Services:**

- Honey bee removal service. **Call Jeff Brown, (734) 422-0269.**

##### **Wanted:**

- Wanted: Power extractor and de-capper. **Contact Bill Andre, by phone (248) 651-0522 or by e-mail, [Wandre225836@comcast.net](mailto:Wandre225836@comcast.net).**
- Wanted: location for 10 colony placements, Oakland County desired. **Call Jim Armstrong at (248)473-4187.**
- "Expanding apiary; wants used hive bodies, supers, frames and an uncapping machine. **Call Don Ragan (313) 822-6193 or email [don@windmillhillfarm.com](mailto:don@windmillhillfarm.com).**"

Note: ads in the Bargain Corner are free to SEMBA members. To place an ad, contact Susanne at [souxsieq2@msn.com](mailto:souxsieq2@msn.com), or phone 248-476-4991 or Roger Sutherland [rsuther@hotmail.com](mailto:rsuther@hotmail.com).

Southeastern Michigan  
Beekeepers' Association  
*Organized April 1, 1934*

Oakland Beekeepers' Club



Schoolcraft Beekeepers' Club



Seven Ponds Beekeepers' Club



SEMBA Membership  
5488 Warren Road  
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