

NOVEMBER 2023

MCBA NEWSLETTER

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

REGINA RHOA

I am humbled and proud to take over the role of the President. I have big shoes to fill from Greg Lehman and Dan Boylan before. But I know I am up to the challenge. I have served on the MCBA board for 8 years as Secretary, Vice President and now President. I honestly hope the job will bring new challenges, but I know having the strong board members we now have, they will make my job so much easier. I don't think most members realize how much work these board members do from: managing MCBA website, managing club finances, membership, event coordination, booking monthly meeting speakers, and multiple other committees. We are always looking for people to help us out with different committees, whether it be wax dipping, picnic or banquet planning. It takes a team of people to make these events happen smoothly. If you are interested, send me an email at montcopabees@gmail.com.

I was recently reminded that I am the first female President of the MCBA. While beekeeping has historically been a male hobby/business, things have shifted over the last 10 or so years. Our board consists of 5 females with 3 out of 4 executive officers being females. I often go to state and regional meetings and the audiences now consist of 30% females. Also, I serve on the PSBA board of directors, and we now have 2 out of 5 elected officers as females.

This coming year, we will have a lot of great speakers at our monthly meetings. I encourage you to come out and meet your club members in person to talk bees. If you cannot join us, we still have the zoom option available.

This month, I have co-authored a memorial article about Harold Jenkins with Brian Marcy. As you all should be aware, Harold passed away on October 7th. By the time you read this, we will have already said our goodbyes to Harold at his memorial. Please take the time to read the article. Harold was an amazing person and so many people shared great memories of him. Also, I wrote an article on insulating hives. Even though, I will be taking over the presidency, I will continue to provide articles to the newsletter. If you are so inclined and capable, we always love additional content people write and share, whether it is just a trick or tip you would like to share or your favorite honey recipe.

Though Jim Bobb and Harold's memorials were sad, I have been able to connect with some older MCBA members and officers that are no longer active with the club but have a lot of history to share. I have been trying to get access to some of the older MCBA records from Harold's family and Jim Bobb's records. I would like to put together a chronical history of our club. Stay tuned...

If I have not had the pleasure of meeting you, please take the time to introduce yourself at our monthly meetings.

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HAROLD JENKINS MEMORIAL

BY REGINA RHOA (MCBA PRESIDENT AND PSBA SECRETARY)
AND BRIAN MARCY (FORMER MCBA VICE PRESIDENT)

It is with great sadness and honor that Pennsylvania beekeepers remember one of their own, Harold Jenkins, 91, who passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 7, 2023, at St. Mary's Manor in Lansdale. Harold was a life-long resident of Lansdale, PA. He held lifetime memberships to both Montgomery County Beekeepers Association (MCBA) and Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association (PSBA) beekeeping associations for 50+ years, where he served as a former MCBA President and on various PSBA committees. Harold won state-wide recognition in 2014 as PA 'Beekeeper of the Year' from the PSBA.

In the short time since his passing, several beekeepers have shared their thoughts and memories of Harold which are presented here as a brief and incomplete memorial to a long life shared with family, friends, and colleagues. Please access Harold's obituary at www.huffandlakjer.com/obituary/harold-w-jenkins for additional details of a life well-lived and of a man well-loved by so many.



Some of the beekeepers who knew Harold best are no longer with us or are otherwise unable to share their memories. Others knew Harold best simply by his relentless attendance at both county- and state-level events, where he made his presence known through friendly conversation, his active participation in association business, and by counseling new and experienced beekeepers. Despite his advanced age, Harold remained a fixture at MCBA executive board meetings up until the last couple of years, when he could no longer drive safely to meetings – despite holding and using his driver's license until the age of 90. Harold did not own, nor did he use a computer for remote internet access to association meetings, as he felt that beekeeping events, like sporting events, were best attended and enjoyed in person.

Jim Bobb, a well-known dignitary in Pennsylvania's beekeeping family, was Harold's longtime friend and frequent travel partner, especially after Harold was no longer willing or able to drive long distances. Until a year or two before the COVID-19 pandemic, Jim would often drive Harold to bee events and occasionally to doctor's appointments, even when Jim was beginning to deal with his own medical issues. As many already know, Jim also passed away recently. Harold passed away quietly in his sleep on the day of Jim Bobb's funeral, as if Harold was allowing us to honor Jim's life before he himself slipped away.

HAROLD JENKINS (CONT'D)

Brian Marcy, former MCBA Vice President, shared, that he had known Harold since 2006 when he first joined the MCBA as a new beekeeper. During several of those years, Harold joined MCBA's Farm Show team to create an educational county exhibit for competition in Harrisburg. Harold attended each planning meeting and was part of the set-up and tear-down teams at the PA Farm Show complex. Although Harold was a lover of bees, beekeeping, black coffee, 'Chocolate Thunder' donuts, jokes, limericks, and 'No' votes, he was passionate about, and so thankful for, his face-to-face fellowship with other beekeepers. Brian had been traveling with Harold as a driver on several occasions, and their latest journey was a trip to enjoy the 2023 PSBA Summer Picnic, which was Harold's last beekeeping event. During their journeys, Brian always enjoyed Harold's stories about Lansdale history, road trips with his father, his military service in Korea, his work for many years as an electronics technician, and his family.

Ellen Codd shared that Harold came to meetings long past the time that many of us would have persisted coming. Up to the time when COVID interrupted in-person meetings, Harold came out to meetings even though he had to navigate the steps at the 4H building by going down the steps backwards. He actively attended MCBA banquets and picnics, board meetings, and PSBA meetings. A succession of MCBA members assisted his attendance to events by providing rides: Jim Bobb, Mark Antunes, Priscilla Bonsell, Brian Marcy—and likely others. Harold had a self-made calendar of beekeeping events and worked to make sure he didn't miss any of them!

For years, Harold managed the snack break at MCBA monthly meetings, hauling coffee pots and coffee, cookies and other munchies in his infamous van. Ellen had heard about Harold's van, but seeing was believing. One month when, after the meeting, she assisted Harold in carrying out all the snack break supplies to his vehicle and she got the full experience: the question was where would the snack things fit—as the van was already FULL of stuff!

Ellen stated that attendance was not a passive thing for Harold; he regularly asked questions of the officers who conducted the meetings or of speakers. When votes were taken, Harold was a reliable "NO," whether at the state or local meeting level. She thinks he liked the attention he grabbed in being against any motion!

Ellen stated that Harold thoroughly read the bee journals, engaging club members regarding their view of certain articles. Often, other members hadn't yet gotten to the journal in question, one member commenting that they had to work during the daytime that Harold had available to read journals!

Vince Aloyo, longtime MCBA board member and former PSBA Vice President, shared that he remembered that the club used to meet in the Lansdale Public Library. One time Harold told us that we were sitting at about the place of his former living room. Harold was always up to date on his beekeeping facts and would always ask good questions or make pertinent comments at general meetings.

Priscilla Bonsell, former MCBA board member, also shared that Harold loved coffee, which he made at the monthly MCBA meetings, where he oversaw the snacks. Those snacks included cookies that had a slight petroleum flavor, as he kept the cookies and the rest of the snacks in the back of his van in-between meetings. Priscilla also orchestrated a clean-up day at Harold's property, so that Harold could avoid being fined by his local borough. The fine was due to the "bee graveyard" of old equipment that Harold had accumulated after giving up beekeeping. Thirty or more members showed up to help. Priscilla had so many volunteers that she had to cap it at a certain number of people and come up with a schedule. Harold wanted to give anything away that was still useable so that it would find a new life with another beekeeper.

HAROLD JENKINS (CONT'D)

Mark Antunes, former MCBA President, shared that whenever he asked Harold how he was doing, he almost always responded with “improving”. Mark stated that Harold was a contrarian and very fastidiously correct on the most minute details. At one MCBA general meeting, a presenter was showing a slide from a presentation of how to prepare pollen patties. The presenter stated that he was preparing the patties on a cookie sheet. Harold was obligated to speak up by stating that it wasn’t a cookie sheet, since Harold worked in a bakery and cookie sheets are flat. The slide showed a jelly roll sheet.

Mark said that whenever Harold attended either PSBA or MCBA board or member meetings, and a vote was cast for a motion, Harold would always vote ‘No’. Mark remembered, once when Bill Monjack, past PSBA Vice President, had asked him, “Why did you vote no?”, and Harold responded, “Because I could”.

Charlie Vorisek, former PSBA President, shared that once everyone approved a meeting motion, Harold would remind Charlie of Robert’s Rule and that he had to ask for ‘Nays’, in which Harold would promptly and loudly vote, ‘No’. It wasn’t the rejection of the motion, but rather the privilege to vote ‘No’. As Harold aged, Harold would nod off during meetings. Steve Repasky, and now Mark Gingrich, who has taken over the PSBA presidency, would wake Harold so he could get in his ‘No’ vote. If Harold wasn’t present, and a vote was being held, a chuckle would occur, and someone would ask, ‘Where is Harold?’. It was always in admiration and respect for the soft lessons being learned.

Regina Rhoa, MCBA President, shared that Harold loved small talk at meetings. As the years went on, Harold developed significant hearing loss, but that did not stop him from talking to you. He always had a smile and kind words, though he likely could not hear most of what you said. She always felt like one of those large hearing funnels was in order.

Regina shared that in 2019, Harold attended a MCBA board meeting to propose that a t-shirt be made for the association’s 100-year anniversary. He designed and presented a hand-drawn logo, as he did not own a computer. Of course, the board had to tease Harold that he was probably around when the MCBA was formed, which didn’t seem far off. Nevertheless, we followed his advice and made the t-shirts, which were sold at MCBA’s 100th anniversary celebration party, that Harold had also recommended we do.

Michaeleen Pacholski, past MCBA board member, shared that new MCBA beekeepers looked to Harold, being one of the elder association members, for his expertise as they entered the world of beekeeping. He would happily share his methods for successful beekeeping. When someone brought a new or unusual idea, he would kindly just shrug and remain silent. When Michaeleen would travel with Harold to a large bee event, it was like traveling with a celebrity. He always attracted a crowd of people happy to see him. Harold thrived on the social side of beekeeping.

Jane Wang, former MCBA member and now a native bee enthusiast, shared that she would often chat with Harold before each meeting when she took over the "canteen" duty from him. She found out that he was in Incheon, Korea during the Korean war. She shared that she grew up in Incheon years later after Harold was there, but it is amazing to think that they traversed the same landscape years apart! There is a park up the hill from her former home dedicated to the brave soldiers that served and died during that war, including a huge statue of General MacArthur.

Harold was instrumental in having a bench made that was dedicated to Reverend L.L. Langstroth, a Philadelphia native, in the Langstroth Bee Garden at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia PA.

Losing Harold is like losing a piece of history. He will be sorely missed by those who were lucky enough to know him.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

2023 MCBA Fall Banquet

November 11, 2023

5PM-9PM

Location: St. Peters Lutheran Church in Hilltown (1530 Augsburg Drive)

Menu: Harvest Salad, Rolls, Roast Pork Loin, Chicken Piccata, Roasted Red Bliss Potatoes, Classic Baked Ziti and Vegetables

Beverages: BYO! Bring your favorite wine, beer, mead or your favorite beverage. Other non-alcoholic options will be provided.

Activities/Contests: General raffle, premium basket raffle, live auction, photo contest (4"x6" preferred, 1 entry per person), honey desert contest (must feature honey as a primary ingredient)

Other notes: Casual dress; please feel free to bring appetizer or desert to pass (with a label describing the dish); bring cash/check/credit card to participate in raffle/auctions.

Registration is now CLOSED, however tickets can be purchased at the door at a slightly higher price

BeeWorks, LLC

To quote former NFL executive Andrew Brandt, “the worst time to find a quarterback is when you need a quarterback.” While I may have pulled a muscle reaching for this analogy, I would argue the worst time to source your beekeeping equipment is when you *need* extra equipment. Good news - you don’t have to wait until swarm season in 2024 to scramble for extra frames, hive bodies, swarm traps, etc. Our friends at BeeWorks, LLC are keeping winter hours to satisfy your 2024 apicultural preparation.

Hours:

Wednesdays 2PM-6:30PM & Saturdays 3PM-6PM throughout the winter!

NOTE: BeeWorks will be closed Saturday, November 11th

General Meetings

General meetings for 2023 have concluded. We look forward to seeing you all at next year’s meetings with another great program of speakers set for 2024!

WINTER INSULATION

INSULATED OUTER COVER

Regina Rhoa, MCBA President

Over the years, I have experimented with how to insulate my hives and avoid extra moisture. My first year, I used the standard homasote boards to prevent moisture from raining down on the bees. Unfortunately, they must be replaced every year, which is an additional cost and they also do not provide any top insulation factor.

The next year, I went to using a quilt box which you fill with wood chips, which absorbs the moisture. While they worked ok, it was another piece of equipment to store in my ever growing inventory. Also, no insulation factor.

I then started experimenting with removing the inner cover, which is now a growing trend. It is believed that having top ventilation causes the warm air from the cluster to rain back down on the bees once it hits the cold air at the top of the hive. In contrast, the use of thick paperbacked foil insulation boards inside the telescoping outer cover without a top entrance prevents the moisture from forming at the top, since the thick insulation keeps the top of the hive warmer. The moisture will then collect on the side of the hive walls, where the bees can collect the water. So, the next year I tried the insulation boards and no top entrances. Honestly, cutting these boards to exact measurements are a pain. I used a jigsaw, which never saw much use until I entered beekeeping. In the spring the bees would chew through the paperbacked foil, then the ants would move in. So, I had to dig them out each spring, which would damage the boards. If they survived ok - another thing to store away.

One month last year, I heard Bill Hesbach, EAS Master Beekeeper and an expert in hive winterization, spoke at an MCBA monthly meeting about winter insulation. He said the most important insulation is the top insulation, which he keeps on all year long. He also stated that the top insulation in summer, keeps the hives cooler. I later sent him an email and asked him how he keeps out the ants in the summer. I guess up in Connecticut, it is not as much a problem, thus he keeps the insulation boards in all year long.

So, I said to myself, how can I keep these boards on all year long. What I did was cover the insulation board with heavy duty tinfoil, which was wrapped like a Christmas present. The seams were taped with foil tape used for ductwork. The wrapped insulation was then inserted inside outer cover. I cut ¼” hardware cloth using wire cutters, which is used for screen bottom boards. The hardware cloth was stapled to the bottom rim and then using a hot glue gun I sealed the sharp edges.

WINTER INSULATION (CONT'D)

All my hives this year went through 12 months with this design and no damage to insulation board! Also, I did notice that the insulation keeps the top of the hive warmer in winter, since the bees spent a lot of time at the top of the hive. Only 2 drawbacks: first, you must strap or weigh down your outer cover to prevent it from blowing off. Second, sometimes a sharp edge gets exposed, and you get a cut or your nitrile gloves gets ripped. Either way, I was happy with the design and thought I would share. I was also able to adapt the design to a migratory cover. Photos of both are included.

I also used hive wraps for many years. When I overwinter my nucleus hives, I normally push them side by side with the entrances facing opposite direction, then put a wrap around both. Last year, I had one standalone nucleus that I never got around to moving or wrapping. It did just fine. Last year we had a very mild winter, which may be why, but I think I will experiment more with no hive wraps, which probably really isn't needed in this area if the hives have a sufficient wind block. Remember, the bees warm the cluster, not the entire hive bodies.



JUST MEAD IT

In this year's August general meeting, we were lucky to welcome Marc Johnson of Stonekeep Meadery and Wine Cellars to give us the rundown on mead. Marc's depth of knowledge and enthusiasm for mead-making was apparent from the jump, and I certainly learned a lot in a short period of time.

To quickly recap: what is mead? Is it simply fermented honey, water, and yeast, referred to by many as "honey wine"? Well, yes, but also not necessarily. First of all, there are *many* variations of mead that can be broken into hierarchal classes (more on that in a minute). You also have a variety of yeasts at your disposal that can take a mead anywhere from 0.5% alcohol all the way up to 25% alcohol. There are beer-like styles of mead, and mead that finishes closer to a wine. There are different *methods* for making mead including pasteurization, boiling, and a no-boil approach. But without getting into the weeds too deeply, in order to satisfy the most basic definition of mead, the "must" (honey+water+X mixture) must derive 51% or more of its fermentable sugars *from honey*.

With me so far? Great! Now let's talk a little bit about those classes of mead. This is where things get pretty interesting as we approach an intersection of chemistry, art, and imagination. Truth be told, I have my first batch of mead brewing right now, and I decided to keep it simple: honey, water, yeast (and some yeast nutrients). I wanted to prove to myself I could pull off essentially the most basic version before I branch out into some of these intriguing styles of mead:

- **Melomel** - perhaps the most common class of mead, melomels are meads that incorporate fruit. There are many sub-categories in this class such as cysers (apple), pyments (grape), and many more
- **Metheglin** - mead brewed with spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, vanilla, etc. Holiday spiced mead, anyone?
- **Acerglyn** - mead brewed with maple syrup
- **Braggot** - made with honey and grains creating a beer-like mead
- **Capsicumel** - mead brewed with chiles or other spicy peppers
- **Sack mead/great mead** - mead that is high in alcohol % and benefits greatly from patience/conditioning
- **Hydromel/session mead** - mead with a lower alcohol % (like a session beer)

This list is nowhere near comprehensive, as many specific styles and ingredients have been popularized throughout time and around the globe. But if you have a surplus of honey and enjoy a drink from time to time, consider experimenting and honing your ideal mead recipe!

Note: Google and Youtube will be your friend if you decide to take a shot on your own batch of mead! It's important to make sure you have the correct equipment and ingredients on hand to satisfy your method/approach. Perhaps the most important note is STERILIZATION!!! Every step of the mead-making process has the potential to introduce nuisance microbes that can infect your batch and produce a...not-so-good product. Because there is a fair amount of effort and time involved, proper sterilization of equipment (and hands) every step of the way is critical.

www.stonekeepmeadery.com

THE BEGINNERS' CORNER

Frame Maintenance

Hello again, fellow beginner beekeepers! By now, you have hopefully given some thought to (and possibly implemented) your winter hive configurations. To wrap, or not to wrap? To ventilate, or not to ventilate? These concepts come with great debate in the beekeeping community, and I'm not going to get into that today. Hopefully you have consulted your mentors on an approach you feel comfortable with and can head into winter with some confidence.

With that out of the way, I thought I would share an offseason tip that I personally like to tackle this time of year: frame maintenance.

First and foremost - how are you storing your frames? Were you able to freeze them for ~3 days before putting them away for winter? How long ago did you pull excess frames and when did you last get eyes on them? Wax moths, my friends. I highly recommend a quick inspection on your stored frames - if you have an infestation that you missed, you may yet have time to salvage these frames (ask me what I did this past weekend...) I won't get into too much detail on wax moths here, but as beginners, drawn comb is SO valuable. So take some time just to make sure you don't have a problem festering out of sight.

As you sort through your frames of beautifully drawn comb, I recommend taking advantage of this time of year to clean frames up. Refer to the pictures below. As the active beekeeping season goes on, more and more propolis and wax gets deposited all over the place. Most annoying is the thick, sticky propolis that gets built up between frames and on the very ends of top bars. You may have noticed on your most recent inspections frames not fitting together quite as snugly, and a little more elbow grease required to (carefully) free a frame for a closer look. With the cooler weather we have now, this propolis (and wax) can be chunked or flaked off without coating your hands/tools in industrial-grade tackiness.

When doing so, I like to keep a tupperware or bag handy to save my valuable wax! Propolis also has value (although I have not personally explored the applications of propolis myself). As you clean these materials up, be mindful where the debris lands - particularly the propolis. If you leave it in your full-sun driveway, for example, be prepared for it to stay there for a long time (and watch your step!). But in cooler weather, it can easily be swept up and tossed or stored to produce hive products later.



Note: There are some freezing temperatures on the way between 11/10 and 11/15. If you are concerned about biological activity (larvae) in your stored frames, consider temporarily moving them to a safe outdoor location (ideally sealed or in shed/garage) to take advantage of the cold weather buying time for longer term storage

MEET THE BOARD

2023 MCBA Board of Directors

Officers

*President - Greg Lehman
*Vice President - Regina Rhoa
Secretary - Melissa Shainline
Treasurer - Melissa Natale

General

Vince Aloyo
George Balock
Robert Brooks
Bob “Buzz” Buswick
Kelly Downs
Scott Famous
Jeanne Gable
Derek Pruyne
*Past President - Dan Boylan

Note to all MCBA members: the board holds monthly meetings that can be found on our Events page [HERE](#). Members are always welcome to join these meetings to share thoughts/ideas, or to simply observe the inner-workings of the club.

*Effective 11/1/2023, the role of MCBA President was assumed by former Vice President Regina Rhoa, and Greg Lehman is now serving as Past President. The next newsletter will reflect the 2023 elections (concluded in October) and updated officer positions.

Montgomery County Beekeepers' Association of Pennsylvania (MCBAPA) is a 501(c)3 non profit organization located in Montgomery County, PA. Our membership consists of individuals who are both commercial and hobby beekeepers. The MCBAPA encourages and promotes active involvement within our community and our organization. Membership is open to an individual who is a beekeeper or has an interest in beekeeping, and who wants to promote honeybee health.

Our Mission: Providing educational outreach to the public, supporting fellow beekeepers and working to promote sound beekeeping practices and honeybee health.