

Beekeeper's been at it for 60 years

By JOYCE BUPP
Staff correspondent

RED LION—If the sight of a honey bee makes you think only of painful stings, you should visit Quay Minnich. Minnich, who lives at 160 N. Main Street, has been a beekeeper for over 60 years. Last November, he was named Beekeeper of the Year by the Pennsylvania State Beekeepers' Association during their annual Winter meeting.

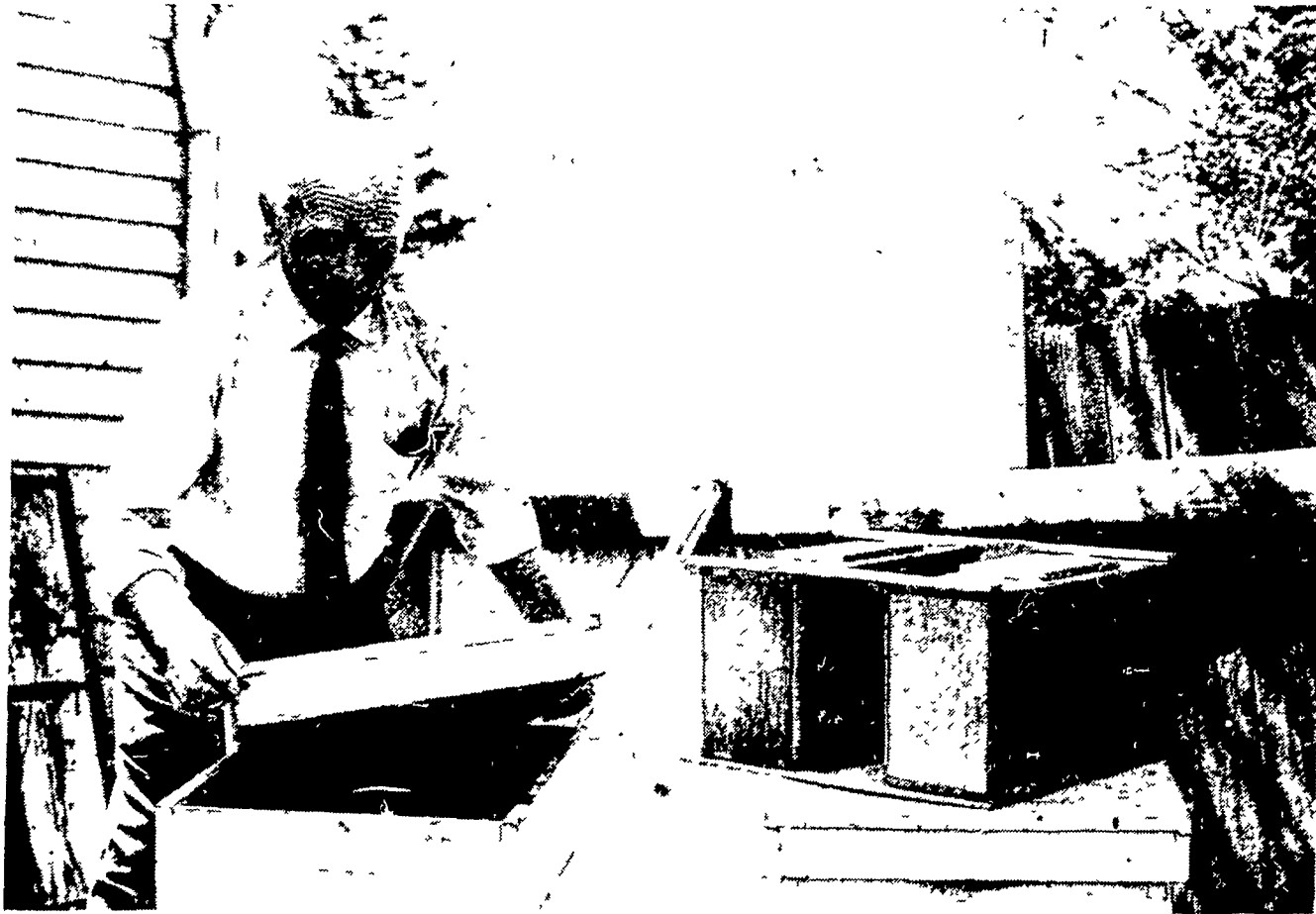
As a child, the bee enthusiast frequently visited an uncle's farm, where he spent many fascinating hours watching the activities of the honey-producers through small glass viewing holes in the old hives.

Then, when he was 18, Minnich became owner of his own first two hives. He now maintains about 40 hives scattered throughout rural areas of southern York County, although at the peak of his beekeeping he recalls keeping about 100 of the colonies.

"Early honey is ready in July," says Minnich, "But we usually harvest the main crop of it in the Fall. When it's first produced, honey is as thin as water and it must be allowed to remain in the combs until it ripens." During the ripening process, the bees evaporate excess moisture from the liquid by fanning warm air across it with their wings. If harvested before the procedure is complete, unripened honey will ferment and turn sour in storage. Minnich's yard provides

the home for two hives of constantly working Golden Italian bees. It's a quiet green sanctuary with seasonal flowers and even a small pool to provide water for the bees. Like all livestock, there are certain bee pedigree lines that exhibit more desirable genetic qualities than others. Golden Italians are very gentle; and visitors to the Minnich hives frequently comment on the "tameness" of the bees. Walking among the bees as they come and go from the hive does not appear to disturb them, although one occasionally flies near a

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Quay Minnich adds a package of bees to one of his hives.

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