

Bob has about 50 bee hives in different hues, hence the name Rainbow Apiaries.

Rainbow Apiaries Provides Training For Beekeeping, Honey Extraction, Candlemaking

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
EAST EARL (Lancaster Co.)

— "We call this a Ma and Pa operation down on the farm," said Bob Hughes.

Their down-on-the-farm operation on Turkey Hill Road is a bee farm, where Hughes and his wife Annette sell everything from honey to beeswax candle supplies.

Although they have a small barn set up for their business, the majority of the candle-making is done in their home. That's because it's more convenient and economical.

"It's a cottage business," Hughes said. "In here we have heat in the winter, air conditioning in the summer, running water, phone, and a television. We'd have to pay a fortune to have all that in the barn."

The sweet aroma of honeycomb lingers in the oak kitchen that is filled with candle molds, stacks of beeswax, honey and completed candles.

"We don't try to be a craft store, but we do have a lot," Annette said of the couple's supply of candle making accessories.

Another room of their home is stacked with boxes ready to fill the many mailorders the Hughes receive for honey and candle supplies and equipment. They even ship to Germany because made in Germany tastes quite differently than that from Pennsylvania.

Many different types of molds are used for candle making. Cast-iron, pop-up, lifetime, candy molds, and even imported ones from Holland are used to produce everything from tapers to figurines. Candles are also formed by dipping the wick in hot wax. Longenberger molds, made for cookies, work well with beeswax. After the wax hardens to the shape of the figurine, it is removed from the mold. The next day, a soft cloth is used to buff it to a soft gloss or to be painted.

"We don't throw anything away," Annette said. If candles become old or if they don't turn out quite right, the wax is remelted and formed into new candles.

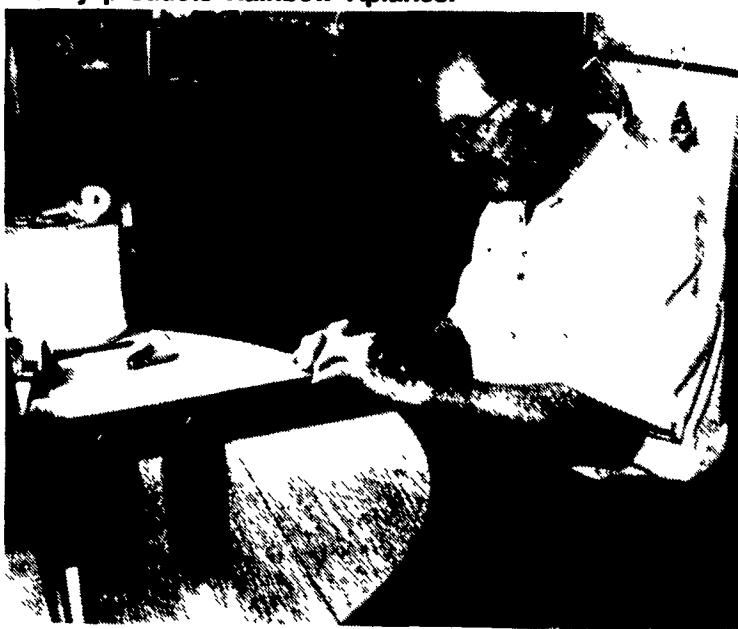
The easiest way, the Hughes have found, to melt wax is in old coffee percolators, which prevents fires from erupting since wax is highly flammable. It takes about 20 to 30 minutes to melt a potful.

Since beeswax has a much higher melting point than paraffin, beeswax candles burn much slower and longer than those made from lower quality waxes.

Natural beeswax varies from a light honey color to a golden brown sheen. For those who prefer other shades, the Hughes have 40



Annette shows off the many candle making supplies and honey products Rainbow Apiaries.



Bob fills an order for 200 rolled beeswax candles. A project that is easily done at the kitchen table.

different colors.

The Hughes said to make candles last longer, chill the candles in the refrigerator and the candle will burn almost double the ordinary timespan. If bloom (a dull finish) appears on a candle, warm it with a hairdryer or wash in soapy water and buff to a shiny sheen.

Recently, the couple branched out into maple syrup. They also have flavored honey for pancakes and ice cream in flavors such as cinnamon, lemon, cherry, and raspberry.

Hughes keeps about 50 hives on his farm and in neighboring areas. The hives are painted in different colors, hence the name, Rainbow Apiaries.

Although the industry has had problems with mites infiltrating the hives, Bob said that a mite resistant queen is being developed.

"If you practice good beekeeping, many problems can be avoided," he said.

Bob was only 15 years old when he first developed an interest in

beekeeping. After school, he worked on Chicago's loading docks, where he unloaded tractor-trailer loads of packaged bees all night long.

After a stint in the service, Bob married and moved to Chicago's suburbs where he purchased live honey bees from the Sears and Roebuck catalog.

"No one was here to help me. So I dumped bees in one hand and held the book in the other," he said.

With hundreds of acres of prairie land, there was always something in bloom, which allowed Bob to extract many different flavors of honey.

Honey varies in taste according to the flowers on which they feed, the weather, and how it's blended.

When his job transferred him to Lancaster County in 1965, Bob bought a small farm at an auction. He helped children set up a bee project for a church project where the profits were given to charity.

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