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Barnyard Notes

Fruit and home gardens aren't the only agricultural departments that have been dealt body blows this season by adverse weather conditions.

Consider the beekeepers whose winged workers have had to battle against a season of rain, DDT, inferior crops and contagious insect disease.

Clarence Dorrance Fenstermaker, veteran Berwick beekeeper, who has 300 hives, says that unless the bees obtain sufficient late-crop honey, principally from buckwheat, they will have only enough honey for themselves and will not have enough to fill the wooden supers which are removed from the tops of the hives for human consumption. If this should be the case it will be the second unsuccessful season in Mr. Fenstermaker's forty-four years of beekeeping.

In the area about Dallas, beekeepers have had a series of difficulties ever since the bad winter of 1944-45 when thousands of bees died because they were unable to make a winter flight. There was not a day that winter when conditions were favorable for their leaving the hives; and as all beekeepers know, bees must make at least one winter flight to relieve themselves in the air or they will die. Ralph Rood of Lehman Avenue, who has kept bees for more than thirty years, lost seven out of his eight colonies that winter.

He doesn't agree with Mr. Fenstermaker that the crop of honey this season has been altogether a failure. So far he has taken off sixty pounds of honey from his remaining hive, and expects to harvest at least thirty more pounds. They have made it of clover, buckwheat and everything they could gather it from. "You can smell it," Mr. Rood says, "when they are bringing in the buckwheat, though where they fly to gather it around here is more than any body knows."

While there were plenty of apple blossoms this spring the bees gathered very little of the nectar because of the wet weather, but in our own garden they made up for the delay just as soon as the gladioli came into bloom. They have also worked diligently over the roses and nasturtiums. A number of times we have found them trapped by a peculiar yellow spider that has infested the garden this season. Within a short time the spider kills them and devours them. Not so with the bumble bees whose great size and strength prevents them falling prey.

And while we are on the subject, we have never seen more bumble bees on the roses and gladioli than on the days after we have sprayed with DDT. They appear to thrive on it while Japanese Beetles and other insects are slowed up for a matter of three or four days—no more.

Another problem that has harassed beekeepers is the prevalence of the serious American foul brood disease—much more serious and contagious than the European type. Will Higgins, who keeps bees both for their honey and the pollination of his orchard, lost twenty-three out of twenty-four of his hives this year.

This disease causes so much havoc among bees that the State Department of Agriculture sends an inspector out annually to check all hives and see that infected colonies are destroyed. Beekeepers are only too willing to co-operate for they know that this disease kills the young larvae while they are still in their cells and will destroy all bees unless rigidly controlled. The current inspector, Paul Zigler of Bethel, completed his inspection in this area about two weeks ago after finding wide infestation here.

Destruction of a colony means a real loss to the beekeeper. A two-pound package of bees and a queen cost about \$4.50, and a hive is currently valued at \$15.

Two ardent bee fanciers, now temporarily out of the business—hobby or nature study, whichever you choose to call it, are Mr. and Mrs. William Robbins of Trucksville. Don't let anybody lead you to believe that Mrs. Robbins is the least important part of this combination. The only reason they sold their 209 hives a few years

ago was because Mrs. Robbins was ill and Bill was afraid he couldn't handle the job alone.

Every week to ten days, Mrs. Robbins used to inspect the colonies, going through them to see that the bees were not creating too many queen cells. If they were she destroyed them for the presence of more than enough queens meant that the bees would swarm and leave their hives under the leadership of some one of the queens. Earlier in the year, the beekeeper can frequently recapture these swarms and set them up to housekeeping in a new hive but in the late summer and fall such a colony is apt to find it difficult to produce enough honey to keep it alive through the winter.

Jerry Machell, one of the youngest bee men hereabouts had two swarms get away from him early this summer. He captured both of them and put them in new hives. One swarm was perfectly content and got down to business, put its house in order and started gathering food, but the other was dissatisfied with its apartments and took flight for other quarters. Although Jerry doesn't check his hives every ten days, he believes it is a good policy not only to forestall the presence of too many queens but also to get acquainted with the bees. They are less apt to be ugly and become more tame if you disturb them once in a while, Jerry says.

Perhaps the man who knows bees best and has lived with them longest is William Roushey whose twenty-four colonies are housed at his home on Franklin street, Shavertown.

Mr. Roushey, now past eighty, has kept bees all but two years since he was a lad of twelve. His bees did well during the forepart of the summer, "but they are not up to standard now. I don't believe" he says, "I'll get more than a half of a ton of honey this season." Last year he harvested 1,200 pounds.

Mr. Roushey seldom gets stung by a bee except, "When I'm careless." He works around them days on end without being touched. "It isn't a matter of bees liking or disliking people, it's just the way you handle them," Mr. Roushey says. "Take all this fuss about skunks in Wilkes-Barre" he added, "why, you can pick up a skunk anywhere if you just know how, I've picked up dozens of them in my life without any trouble, but you've got to know how to handle them."

Unlike Ralph Rood, Mr. Roushey knows where his bees find their buckwheat. "I've watched them. They head right for Bill Higgins' buckwheat patch. It's just a short flight across the Shavertown valley."

Bees will travel a mile and a half to two miles to work on their favorite blossoms. Right now goldenrod, the bane of hay fever sufferers, is being thoroughly attended to.

"Maybe," the beekeepers sigh, "this isn't a good season for honey, everything has been against it; but you'd never know it from watching the bees. They are just as diligent and hard-working as ever building for their own social security." And in the words of Mr. Roushey, "If you lived to be 100 you'd never learn all there is to know about bees."

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Editor and Publisher

HOWARD W. RISLEY

Associate Editor

MYRA ZEISER RISLEY

Contributing Editor

MRS. T. M. B. HICKS

maybe every now and then I will find time to contribute a column or two to make it look like I'm still a part of that "Friday grape-fruit"—you know—the thing that hits the eye first thing in the morning—why, the Dallas Post, of course.

I've heard from several people that you published my first letter to you. I do think it would be nice if I had a copy of it for my scrap book to fill in the pages of clippings from the "Post" where I left off years ago. I hope you can spare one or find one somewhere. Thanks.

The weather still continues to be de-light-ful. Fresh mornings, warm noondays and breezy evenings.

Last Saturday we took a ride to San Pedro. We went through their lovely park and sat in trellised patios, high up, observing the boats, ships and yachts in the ocean. The huge waves would bring up with them abundance of kelp—a sea weed, and let it lay all along the beach like thousands of yards of twisted wet rope. Then we went over to Point Firman which at one time at this certain high point had a road and homes long side the ocean, but came a tremor or settling of the earth at this point and made a gap several yards wide—things were shaken up quite badly and homes had to be moved and the road closed off—much of the earth close to the cliff went down into the ocean and now the entire area is fenced off and the crevice is over ten feet wide.

Looking down into this zigzagging, jagged, cracked, once flat land gives one a frightened feeling—yet, it shouldn't have bothered me as on my way over to Chicago, I came across miles and miles of this type land and some in places looked like it had belched forth lava or tar that didn't overflow too much—but piled up high and in uneven mounds. From there we went riding through the Hollywood hills where many movie stars have their homes, and then to dinner where the meals are served out doors under giant umbrellas and the chairs are really comfortable to sit in. A complete fish dinner with nautical atmosphere.

To make it a complete day we attended Margaret Truman's debut. The Hollywood Bowl, I understand has a seating capacity of 20,000 and she drew a crowd of 15,000. I read an article by a critic who was amazed at the turn out. I believe he had something when he said he believed that there were two reasons why she drew such a crowd. One was to see the president's daughter and the other to see if she could really sing. Regardless of what it was—my true opinion is that she has possibilities—she has a lovely voice—has poise and is graciously adorable. Although she is only twenty-three, I firmly believe that by the time she reaches thirty she will do something to her audience. A finished singer, like a violinist, can make the audience feel every note and word—chill at high notes or sob in-

wardly—glow with excitement or sit in wonderment at the pearl like notes coming from the throat or instrument. She was well received and gave two encores. It was wonderful to think that she—so young—had the courage and confidence to face such a mass of humanity; people ready to criticize and tear apart every note. She did well—but the future will hold more for her.

Sunday we spent the forenoon at Exposition Park, almost in downtown L. A., went through the various buildings that displayed exhibits of the early movie days, stage coach era and events coupled with it, prehistoric animals that are displayed in glass cases in their own settings and exhibits of bones that have been found and put together from the La Brea Tar Pits in L. A. also. I have visited these pits and the stories told in regards to them are fascinating and hold one spell bound. From there we attended the Rodeo at the Coliseum held under the auspices of the L. A. County Sheriff's Association. There was Gene Autry and many cowboys from Texas, Arizona, Montana, Colorado and California watching the show.

We spent the Labor Day weekend at Laguna Beach—a truly darling little town. I'm enclosing a weekly edition which can be picked up free at any newsstand there. It's quite interesting and gives one a general idea as to what the town has. We spent some time on the beach under an umbrella of course, Brooke can't take the sun for too long, he gets like a lobster in no time and then suffers after. Lazed around, toured the town, took in the "Arts", as this town is noted for its lovely scenery, hilltop homes and ocean views; and artists from all over come here to find true beauty to paint. We had dinner in one place that impressed me very much. The tables were along side huge windows overlooking the ocean; and the pink sunset, with the mist from the ocean, made it look like a soft velvet and chiffon curtain covering the part beyond. On our way back we passed by Santa Ana where the much publicized trial of the Overells is being held. Got home about 9:30 Monday night and no sooner had we gotten inside when we heard an awful crash, I looked out, of course and saw what usually hap-

pens on our corner at least once a week—a collision—What I once said about California drivers still goes. Heard you both were away over the holiday, hope you enjoyed your trip. So until the next time, keep smiling. Sincerely, Irene Arnold September 3, 1947 1021 1-2 W. Century Blvd. Los Angeles 44, Cal.

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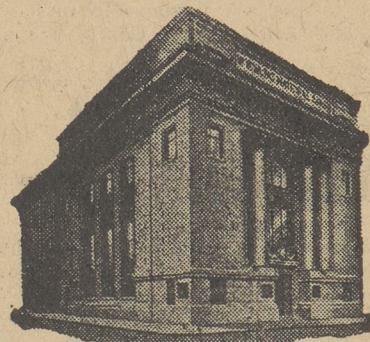
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