

The ABA Stinger



HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

Page 1 Letter from the President	Page 5 & 6 Hives to Haiti
Page 2 Letters from VP	Page 7 & 8 Sentinel Apriary Report
Page 3 Letter from Secretary & Treasurer	Page 9 OJ Blount Retires
Page 4 Announcements	

Letter from the President – December 2019

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. At our last board meeting we agreed to cancel the State picnic in May because of lack of attendance and long travel from each end of the state for two or hours and then going back home. Although if each region wants to have one would be good if you want to. The Northern region has to decided to have one May the 2nd. The year is passing by quickly and there is always something to do. In the first part of the year is a quick rush to get everything ready for new queens coming for new splits or replacements, then putting on honey supers hopefully for a strong honey flow. Next harvesting the crop. In the fall of the year getting repairs done and building new boxes, frames, foundation put in. But most of all getting to sell the great honey and beeswax candles. I guess what I'm trying to say, there is always something to be doing. Hope everyone has a wonderful and blessed Christmas. And most of all be safe and please remember the true meaning of Christmas and enjoy family

Phillip Garrison, President

Alabama Beekeepers Association





December 2019 - Letter from the Vice President

I simply want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. Be sure and keep a close eye on your colonies. Items to remain proactive include:

Monitor food stores and feed when necessary. I've been having good success using a bucket feeder with sugar syrup and loose pollen substitute in a hanging bucket.

Treat all colonies for Varroa. This is a one time treatment by vaporizing oxalic acid, performed between Thanksgiving and Christmas. My other treatments take place in the June/July time frame.

Prepare for Spring - this list can become very long very fast. Some of the items include repairing/painting boxes, cleaning/prepping frames, building swarm traps, exploring new apiary locations, etc.

I do some small scale migratory bee keeping and there is a lot of preparation. This entails taking a dozen hives on a trailer from Tuscaloosa County to South Alabama for the early honey flow. There are many things that can go wrong and being proactive is critical. My checklist continues to grow.

Take some time and enjoy "phonelessness". I recently had the wonderful occasion of having my cell phone repaired. The repair was performed quickly but during the time of repair I was "phoneless". I left the repair shop and took a stroll through a local Barnes & Noble. No rings, no doinks, no nothing. No bother from the outside world, a simple time to have alone - REFRESHING!

During the upcoming holiday season we all should experience some small amount of "phonelessness". Take some quiet time. Perhaps you can turn your phone off while with family and friends celebrating. Wouldn't it be strange actually sitting and talking with no interruptions and simply enjoy one another's presence? I double dog dare you!

Merry Christmas to all ...
Vince Wallace
205-339-3318 (call or text)
wallacebees@gmail.com



December 2019 - Letter from the Secretary

Happy Fall everyone! I hope you are all doing well as the cold and flu season is upon us. The great thing about being a beekeeper is that we always have a good supply of honey on hand to help keep us healthy. This is the time of year when I like to use my honeybee resources to make things like elderberry syrup and soap or maybe some chapstick or candles. It's also a great time of the year to make these things for gifts to give to others for Christmas. Speaking of Christmas, it won't be long after the Holidays and we will be getting ready for the ACES Symposium in Clanton. If you haven't registered yet go ahead and get it done. You should be able to find all the information you need on our website. Be sure to go, we might have some good sales on our ABA merchandise and you do not want to miss out. Also, if you missed out on our new ABA T-Shirts at the Fall Conference this year, we will have a new stock for you to choose from at ACES. Enjoy the holidays and take some time for your family because when spring comes around you know where we can be found.....at the hives.

See you soon!

Heather Sinyard, Secretary

December 2019 - Letter from the Treasurer

People often ask me how I got into beekeeping. I was inspired by a movie, The Secret Life of Bees, which came out in 2008.

There was one scene that was so fascinating to me. A beekeeper named August showing a young girl named Lily her bee yard. "I am going to teach you bee yard etiquette," as she was suiting her up to go to the bee yard. "The world is a big huge bee yard, and the same rules apply to both:

First, Don't be afraid!

Second, Don't be an idiot.

Third, Don't Swat.

Above all send the bees Love. Every living thing wants to be loved, said August. They entered the bee yard and opened the first hive. She took the top off and, the sound of the honeybees fanning their wings was inspiring. As Lily moved her hand over the top of the frames with such a calm demeanor.

August removed a frame from the hive and the Queen bee was moving quickly on the frame with the worker bees around her. This scene sparked my interest on beekeeping. I began by going to a beginner's beekeeping classes at the Jefferson County Beekeepers Association.

When I purchased my hives and got home with them, I was not as calm as Lily. Before I took them out of the trunk of the car, I prayed that I would not die down in the woods



unloading honeybees out of the trunk of my car. It was a success! I unload and released them without a single sting. But there was plenty of stings later, including ones to the face. Ouch!! Another thing I have learned, the Queen is almost never on the first frame you take out of the hive. Especially if you are looking for her.

As the ACES Symposium approaches February 1, 2020, I am sure you will attend and learn something you can take back to incorporate into your bee yard.

Wynelle Milstead
Treasurer

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ALABAMA'S MASTER BEEKEEPER PROGRAM

JOIN US FEBRUARY 13TH-15TH, 2020
BECOME A BETTER BEEKEEPER - EXPLORE THE HONEY BEE
DISCOVER NEW AND OLD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

REGISTRATION FORM: WWW.ALABAMAMASTERBEEKEEPERS.COM
COST IS \$100 - FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS CONTACT
KATHY COLEMAN – 334-220-4352
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

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Make plans to attend the **25th Annual ALABAMA BEEKEEPERS SYMPOSIUM** on Feb. 1, 2020 at Clanton Conference & Performing Arts Center in Clanton. Registration is \$40 and includes coffee, lunch and snacks. Beginning beekeepers will want to participate in a conference track designed just for them that will cover modern beekeeping techniques. Experienced beekeepers will have the opportunity to choose among several tracks: **Products From the Hive** –Will feature talks on mead making; honey and honey handling; and cooking. **Keep Your Bees Alive** – Will feature talks on the latest in small hive beetle control; European methods of beekeeping; plant life for your honey bees; and backyard queen rearing.

Jennifer Tsuruda, Tennessee state apiarist, and Meghan Milbrath, Michigan State Extension specialist, will speak give keynotes talks that all participants will want to attend.

Journeyman beekeepers, who are completing requirements to become Alabama Master Beekeepers, will give presentations on planting for pollinators; the importance of bee nutrition; and working with queenless colonies. In addition more than 25 beekeeping supplies vendors from across the United States will be represented in the Vendors Hall.

You may register online at
<https://www.aces.edu/event/25th-annual-beekeeping-symposium/>



HIVES TO HAITI

This journey begins with a step back in time.....long before Rev. Lorenzo Langstroth's removable frame hive (patent on October 5, 1852), past the general use of the woven skeps era and even past the 16th to the 14th century back to the very primitive log or tree trunk hives. You have arrived in Creve, Haiti. But wait, it is 2012. They are still beekeeping in very primitive log and tree trunk hives. The country is in abject poverty with the average daily wage is four to five dollars a day derived by making coal to be used in cooking fires. And yes, the landscape is becoming devoid of trees as they have become the economic base.

This was the scene that Opelika, Alabama resident, Damon Wallace stepped into. Abject poverty, strained beekeeping practices, very rough terrain and no chance of manufacturing modern equipment was evident. This adventure began from an invitation from a retired Auburn Veterinary Professor to teach Haitian Beekeepers a more productive method. The gardening mission was also to "Feed the Children". Having been a long-time member of First Baptist Church of Opelika, Damon decided he would be a part and as a bonus, it included his passion of Beekeeping. He had taught basic beekeeping for 12 or 13 years in Opelika and this was right up his alley. Claybird Bee Education Association was stepping out with donated equipment from many local Alabama Beekeepers and several Georgia Beekeeping Suppliers to a country that spoke several languages. So with an interpreter and very little personal gear, the two were off carrying the equipment. It usually turned in to several day hike into the back country to get to the villages they serve.

Mr. Wallace has several close associates that have donated time and effort to make this project a success. No one is paid, the equipment is donated and transportation to Haiti is by container from Orlando then on to Haiti. It is received by agents and held until the team of two take it to the various locations. The team goes twice a year. At the moment, the travel threat to Haiti is at a level 4 as the civil unrest is at an all-time high. The plan is to go back as soon as possible.



Other organizations have given treadle sewing machines and fabrics that have allowed ladies to sew veils and other protective equipment which is really helping the cause. There are plans to devise a workshop so that they can build the wooden ware that they need. At present, the wood ware is shipped as 10 Langstroth 10-frame supers. A minimal amount of other equipment such as smokers and hive tools was donated. The smoker method that they were using was a banana stalk with a lump of smoking charcoal where by they blew the smoke in the hive by their own breath. It does work but the can and billow smokers that Claybird takes them, that we take for granted here are such a blessing to the Haitian Beekeepers. The goal is to make them sustainable.

“Our 5 year Plan is to provide a modest wood working shop in the communities so that most of the beekeeping equipment needed can be manufactured locally. This will provide jobs and will make the equipment readily available to the beekeepers as they need it.” Damon said.

They have expanded the work in Creve in 2012, Bombardopolis in 2014 and Mare Rouge in 2016. They are doing a “Train-the-Trainer” program using very competent local beekeepers who receive regular, on-going beekeeping and business training from Claybird. At the end of 2018 we had 30 beekeepers experienced in working with bees in log hives that are now in Langstroths. Both men and women from ages 20-70 are learning everything from basic beekeeping, business concepts and mentoring bringing others into a sustainable way of life. At this point, they are able to use email and social media to communicate between visits.

Please consider becoming a part of this worthy endeavor, both for a struggling nation and the love of honeybees. Contact Damon Wallace / Claybird Bee Education Association at www.hivesforhati.org or dwallace@hivesforhati.org or phone 334-524-2077 located at 2003 Highpoint Dr. Opelika, AL 36801.

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Cell Punch Queen Rearing

Rear queens using the cell punch method. Kit with complete instructions including photographs using the tool. Kit includes several items to get started plus a tool that is hand fabricated from raw materials. Send \$20 plus a couple dollars for shipping to:
Wil Montgomery, 1401 Lakemont Dr. S, Southside, AL 35907-5636



Sentinel Apiaries

by Bill Miller

The Sentinel Apiary program was established by the Bee Informed Partnership as a citizen science project for gathering data on colonies around the country. The goal of the Sentinel Apiary program is to become an early warning system to alert beekeepers of potential problems due to increases in Varroa/Nosema (or changes in hive weight with the addition of a hive scale). Participant beekeepers in the Sentinel Apiary program send samples of bees to the University of Maryland every month for a 6-month period from spring through fall; the university lab surveys the samples for Varroa mites and Nosema spores. Sample kits and instructions are provided. In addition, the beekeepers send in colony assessments (number of frames of bees, brood pattern, and queen status) and information of what colony management (e.g.; starting a Varroa treatment) was done during the previous month. The program summarizes this information and publishes it on the Bee Informed Partnership website. The beekeeper also gets a report on his Sentinel Apiary.



The program in 2019 featured 106 Sentinel Apiaries in 29 states. Three of those apiaries were in Alabama; one in Madison County in the north, one in Lee County (Auburn) in the central part of the state, and one in Houston County (Dothan) in the south. I keep the Houston County Sentinel Apiary on behalf of the Wiregrass beekeepers

Association; it doubles as our teaching apiary. I distribute our monthly Sentinel Apiary report with the Wiregrass Beekeepers membership; the data is also summarized and put on the Bee Informed Partnership website. You can look at the results for our apiary (or any other Sentinel Apiary) on <https://research.beeinformed.org/sentinel/>. Just click on the state of interest, and then the county within that state with a Sentinel Apiary.

One of the colonies in our Sentinel Apiary is equipped with a hive scale; this data is also uploaded to the Bee Informed Partnership website. The recorded weights along with a trend line are publicly available on the Bee Informed Partnership Website (<https://research.beeinformed.org/hive-scales/public>). States shown in color have at least 1 scale hive in the Sentinel Apiary program.

One of the goals of the Sentinel Apiary program is to give beekeepers the information they need to make management decisions based on data. To that end, the program observations have shown me many things that changed how I manage my colonies:



- The highly recommended in the literature “sugar shake” method for doing Varroa mite surveys is not reliable as it frequently undercounts the mite load. On several occasions I had done “sugar shakes” that said my mite levels were in the tolerable range, but the alcohol washes done by the Bee Informed Partnership on samples from those colonies found mite levels in the “treat now” or higher ranges. Accordingly, I no longer use or recommend the “sugar shake” mite survey method.
- On a similar note, I learned just how fast Varroa levels can increase. A colony can go from a tolerable mite level to “Why is this colony alive?” in a month. As a result, I have increased my mite check frequency to once a month in the summer.
- Nosema is locally ignorable with low spore counts being observed in my bee samples.
- The hive scale colony confirmed something I suspected: our local fall goldenrod flow was a dud (we were locally in a drought while goldenrod was blooming). Many of the colonies required feeding.

Sentinel Apiaries consist of either 4 or 8 colonies in an apiary; other colonies may be in the apiary.

that are not part of the Sentinel Apiary program. Establishing a Sentinel Apiary does come with a cost; while the 2020 fees have not been announced yet, the fee in 2019 was \$275 for a 4-colony apiary such as the Wiregrass Beekeepers keep. This is reasonable considering the costs of processing the samples, and well within the capabilities of a local beekeeping association. I encourage all the state’s beekeeping associations to set up Sentinel Apiaries. You’ll learn a great deal about what is happening to your colonies in your area.

For more information, check out the bee Informed Partnership website, (<https://beeinformed.org/citizen-science/>).

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**MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT**

If you have not paid your dues for 2020 NOW is the time! The form may be printed from [alabamabeekeepers.com](http://alabamabeekeepers.com) or you may use the one on the back page of this issue of The Stinger.



## A Legend Retires

*Editor's note: Sometimes in our shared love of bees we miss just "who" we have met. OJ Blount is one of those persons. We hope you enjoy his story. FYI, the photo shows OJ under a flag with his WWII image in Andalusia, AL.*

At 18 years of age, OJ Blount was drafted into the Army in 1944. He was living in Garnett, Ark. After basic training, he received training as a cook, before shipping to France aboard the SS Sea Robin. His unit marched through France into Germany and was near Nuremberg when the war ended. He was stationed with the 202 Military Police Unit until discharged in 1947 as a Staff Sergeant. One of his strongest memories was watching US soldiers interrogate German Concentration Camp guards near Dachau. OJ had seen some of the rooms where the Germans had hung prisoners from large hooks hanging on the walls. He guessed that the US soldiers had seen that and more because they were very rough with the German guards. One technique was for one interrogator to give a German prisoner a cigarette, question him quietly, then turn him over to another interrogator who slapped the cigarette out of his mouth, sometimes knocking them down. Before leaving Europe, OJ was attached to Gen. Mark Clark's Vienna Honor Guard. While with that unit, he met Liliana Kostova near Salzburg. Liliana was from Sofia, Bulgaria. After OJ's discharge, he met Liliana in Canada and they were married in 1952. OJ rejoined the Army that year and was sent to Korea. He remembers being stationed near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel when the conflict ended. He was discharged in 1954 but joined the Air Force Reserve in 1955 and remained there until 1961. OJ and Liliana's daughter, Neranza was born in Knoxville in 1955. From 1961-1970, they lived in Louisiana where he farmed. In 1970, they moved to Knoxville, TN. Where he rejoined the Air Force at McGee- Tyson AFB. He was a part of the 110<sup>th</sup> Tactical Control Unit of the Tennessee Air National Guard from 1970 until being discharged in 1986 as a Master Sergeant. They then moved to his present location near the Covington – Escambia County line in Alabama. Their daughter, Neranza, moved with them. Liliana died in 2008. In 2010, OJ married Lucy Conklin. Lucy had been widowed from Charles L. Evans of Brewton, AL. Charles was also a WWII veteran, having served in the Army Air Corps for 20 years. OJ and Lucy are the proud operators of Queen's Castle Beekeeping Association that produces honey.

