OTS QUEEN REARING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Looking back, many beekeepers have asked me over the years about what happened on my beekeeping journey that inspired me, that led to my discovering OTS. I've given this some thought and with much gratitude, I'd like to acknowledge these unforgettable memories of incredible people who were instrumental, who brought great inspiration to my work.

In 1972 I received my first two swarms from a beekeeper named George in a crossroad named Beaverdam, Michigan. George only wanted to catch swarms. He didn't care about honey or pollination but he lived for watching the bees and waiting for them to swarm. This helped me as I was learning and saw a lot of swarm cells. It didn't take me long to realize that I could make a nice income by splitting up a hive into 3 or 4 nucs to sell in the spring. By 1979, I had my portable cardboard splitter box designed and started having it produced to sell nucs and my overwintered queens. My swarm splitting system had to be improved because I couldn't wait for swarms at different times. I needed to design a system where all the cells were reared on the same day in each apiary and on more than one frame but as many frames as possible. I researched all of the known methods at the time of non-grafting. I began buying queens to make my starts as I didn't want to graft or have a grafting house. I also didn't want the same genetics. My breeder queens had to be from overwintered hives with at least 6 frames of brood by the first of May on the 43rd parallel in Michigan. My system, for which I gave the acronym, OTS (On-The-Spot), is now explained on pages 31 and 32 in my book, *OTS Queen Rearing*. OTS completely eliminates swarming as I make artificial swarms from my OTS breeder queens with all the cells started on the same day.

I would like to mention two individuals whose names I can't remember. They were not beekeepers but influenced my thinking tremendously. The first individual was a GMI professor that taught me how to think fairly and openly in order to be a good, non-biased researcher. He taught me to avoid tunnel vision, to examen the wide range of choices around every issue, to

consider each from my own point of view, and then to decide which were plausible, and which would take priority. He taught me that there is no such thing as a know-it-all.

The second individual I met while touring Boston right after helping out at the EAS Master Beekeeper Test at the Maritime Institute on Buzzard Bay. He was an international chess player who just so happened to be touring Boston on his day off from competing in a tournament. Our meeting happened by accident as my wife and daughter took a vacant seat on the tour bus leaving me to sit with this stranger. After normal greetings I asked him where he was from because I couldn't place his dialect. He told me he was from Europe. Since he was on a tour bus I asked him if he was enjoying his vacation. He told me he wasn't on vacation but was an international chess player and had the day off and just wanted to see some of Boston. This man completely captured my attention as I knew there are few people who can play chess at the international level. It was obvious to me that this man was brilliant and I imagined that he could probably think 8-12 moves ahead. I humbly asked if he wouldn't mind my asking him a couple of questions as I play chess with my brother and love the game although I didn't want to bother him about chess on his day off. He said to go right ahead so I asked, "What is the most important thing to know about chess?" His answer completely changed the way I was programmed to think when he showed me how to see a checkmate and the importance of board position.

After I discovered notching in 1985 and wrote the booklet, *IMN System of Queen Rearing*, published in 1988, I knew I had to disclose my discovery but didn't know how to do that and still secure my invention. I decided to copyright my booklet and charge a $150 dollar license fee to use the concepts. One of the first buyers was Jim Paysen, a brilliant engineer that I had the privilege to meet. He showed me his honey house in South Dakota and explained the extractors he designed, how he loaded bulk tankers with honey to go to market, and shared with me his management plan for a successful business. Later, when I met him at his home in Tyler, Texas, he told me that he had measured over one thousand IMN cell cups from different strains of bees to get the exact measurement for his invention of the J'Z B'Z plastic queen cell cups. And

the rest is history as his queen cell cups are sold worldwide and I am honored to have been a part of his success story.

It would be impossible to acknowledge everyone who I had contact with in my over 50 years with the bees so I now acknowledge and thank everyone that had any contact with me because each and every one of you became an important part of my life.

As for those who played a very direct role in bringing my discoveries to fruition, I would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals:

My beautiful wife, Carol, the most important person in my life for over 50 years now, who supported my love for the honeybee and beekeeping and lovingly helped me chase my dream. Carol patiently endured decades of my intense schedule balancing work alongside tending apiaries which often involved very early mornings, very late nights, and ongoing interruptions to whatever we were doing so that I could check a frame or move a hive. She never complained about the time I spent teaching OTS to novice beekeepers and always understood when I had to take a phone call from a beekeeper in distress during our suppertime. Even though she didn't share my level of interest in beekeeping, she always accompanied me to beekeeping conferences all over the country.

Lynn Quinn, an early OTS beekeeper and queen-rearing guide, whose writing, design, illustrations, and photography brought my research and vision for *OTS Queen Rearing* to life. Her keen insights and interpretations of my work over the years helped bring advanced beekeeping concepts down to earth where they could be understood by novice beekeepers.

John O'Connell, wildlife photographer, for some of the photos in the book, his photo editing, and for salvaging and technically enhancing very old photos from my early beekeeping days.

Heather Boersma, along with Rich Wieske, President of Michigan Beekeepers Association, who honored me with the A.J. Cook Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2023 MDA Beekeepers Convention held at Michigan State University.

Gladys Zehr, OTS beekeeper, for assisting with working colonies, teaching OTS to novice beekeepers, and keeping watch over some of my apiaries. Gladys is an excellent OTS beekeeper

who also has a quick eye for noticing and identifying whatever wildlife happens upon us when we're out working bees.

OTS beekeepers Heather Boersma, Mary Bouma, and Rod Lawrence who were always a big help teaching OTS methods at my Field Days.

All OTS beekeepers who put to good use and/or improve upon the concepts found in my book, *OTS Queen Rearing*.

Going forward, I salute all beekeepers out there who are doing their best to rear healthy honeybee colonies in spite of the many obstacles, pests, and chemical hazards. May the honeybee population grow, recover, and flourish once again to return these lands upon which we walk to their original bounty and rich beauty so as to bestow a living paradise for generations to come.

Yours truly for the bees,

Mel Disselkoen