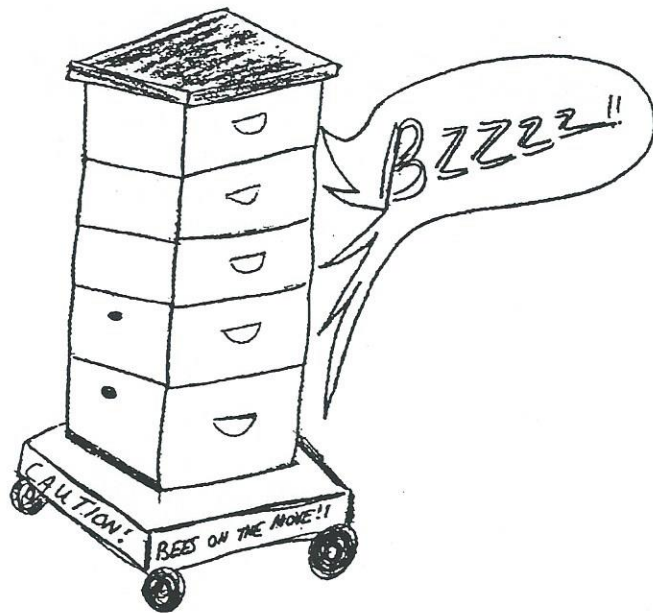


Honey Letter 2001

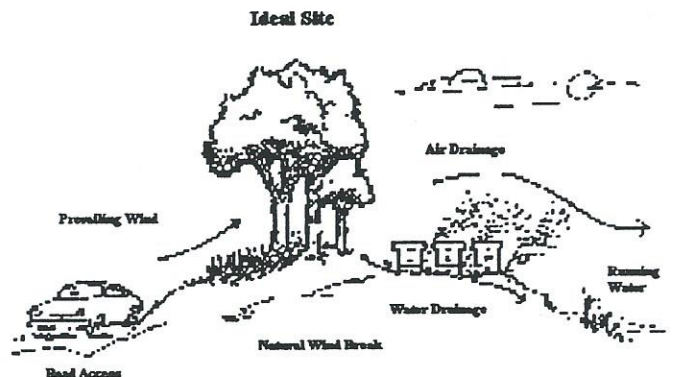
We are sorry not to have any honey to send with our honey letter this year! This year we moved from our longtime home in rural Solon to our new property, Cedar Run. In anticipation of the move, We decided it would be safer and easier not to have to move hives full of live bees.



To move live bees requires that the hive bodies be stapled together with screens over the holes to prevent the bees from escaping in transit. The hives would then have to have been lifted up into the bed of a pickup truck—a heavy, backbreaking job. They would have been in the bed of a truck because if they had been in the back of an SUV for example, bees leaking out could cause serious problems for the driver. Then the hives would have been lifted down into their new location, and the staples and screens removed. I am sure that bouncing in the back of a truck for 20 minutes or so would not have improved on their humor.

One of the most famous beekeepers in Iowa told me the story of when he received his first hive of bees as a gift many decades ago. He put it in the trunk of his car and drove home. He called to his wife to come out to see what he had. Upon opening the trunk of his car, thousands of hot, angry bees came pouring out, chasing the two of them away! Now this same gentleman is a pro, who gives advice to many fledgling beekeepers.

So instead of moving our hives, we started three new hives in our new location. The first thing required is that a bee friendly site be chosen and prepared. That means a location facing southeast, with summer shade and winter sun, sloping down hill away from the hive entrance not too far from a source of water, and with the flight path away from where people and animals walk. We picked a site to the south of our driveway so we could see the hives while driving in and out and so we could easily check on them if we were walking or driving on the road. Their flight path is out over the creek valley, away from the house or barn.



Tom dug some new pallets into the hillside and we installed three hive bodies and waited for our packages to be shipped from Georgia.

It is always exciting to be waiting for packages of bees—and usually even more so for the post office. However, unlike the Cedar Rapids or Solon post offices who called us on the phone in the wee hours of the morning to notify us the packages were in, the Tipton Post Office calmly put a little note in our mailbox to let us know they had arrived. This meant that the bees were their house guests for at least 24 hours before we could pick them up. We would find them on the table where they held the other live shipment of the day which happened to be a couple dozen baby chicks.

We started three packages of bees, each consisting of 5 pounds of bees (about 15,000) and a queen. The easternmost hive immediately did well, but the westernmost and middle hives just never got organized, and never accepted their queens. We replaced their queens twice, but they never accepted them. So those two hives never made it while the eastern hive is thriving.

We recently heard that there is a Czech expression about winter: "Soon the time of winter will arrive that asks you what you were doing all summer." The eastern hive was busy gathering honey and raising new bees, while the other two hives were sulking, for reasons unknown to me. Not wanting to risk our only hive by gathering a crop from them, we decided to let them keep all their well earned honey for themselves this first winter.

We and our horses and (some of) our bees are happy in our new home. We

hope that 2002 brings peace and prosperity to your home.

We hope you had a Merry Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year.

Lyse and Tom

