

Honey Letter 2011

Bees Again!

After our bees disappeared in 2003 for no apparent reason, we were reluctant to start keeping them again until the mystery of colony collapse syndrome had been solved.

Unfortunately, there has been no definite cause or solution found and we grew tired of waiting. We decided to plunge in again.

First, Tom decided that we should start with brand new empty hives just in case there is some infectious agent involved, so he ordered two new hives. We then ordered two packages of bees, but unfortunately, our choices were limited since we started in March. Generally bees need to be ordered in January to be sent at a reasonable time in the spring. As it turned out, the bees were going to come in while we were away at Easter, so the beekeeper who received them hived them up for us since he did not feel they would survive in their packages that long. This meant that Tom had the dicey job of driving hived bees inside his car for a couple of hours to get them home.

What can happen is that what appears to be a quiet, docile hive of bees, warms up, wakes up and gets agitated with the bouncing and vibration of the car. There are only 10,000 bees in each new hive, but imagine if 20,000 bees started flying around your car just as you were getting settled on interstate 80. Equally dramatic is what can happen if you put hives of bees inside a trunk. If the bees get out of the hive in the trunk, when the trunk opens, the thousands of angry bees fly toward the light quickly and that is an impressive experience to have if you are the one who opens the trunk.

Fortunately, knowing about these possibilities, Tom was able to carefully secure the hives and get the bees home without mishap. Knowledge is a powerful thing and fear is a great motivator.

He carefully tended them with just sugar water to get them started. We did not use any of the chemicals or medications that some people use now days, since we have heard conflicting

reports about what is recommended. One hive immediately did well and one immediately did poorly and eventually did not make it. We think that the weak hive had a queen who had been chilled. The thriving hive generated 75 jars of honey and we left plenty of honey for them in their hive for the winter. We are hopeful that they will survive the winter and we will periodically tap the hive gently to listen for an answering murmur of bees in their winter cluster.

This was a milestone year for our boys who, in addition to their first honey harvest, completed their Suzuki Violin Book One, performing their repertoire in a recital at our church in October. Beautiful music in a beautiful setting!

Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Aubrey, Beau, Tom and Lyse



Aubrey, Beau and Linda Judiesch at Trinity Episcopal Church