

Hobbyist at home with bee swarms

By Sharon Dargatz
staff writer

A society older than the Holy Roman Empire quietly thrives in a small corner of Charles Floeter's backyard.

More industrious than some Japanese auto plants, as gentle as puppy dogs and occasionally as fierce as tigers, the swarm of 40,000 Italian bees reside in one of two beehives on the property.

"It's a very strict society. Survival of the fittest is the main thing. That's why they're still together today," Floeter said. "Some bees are morticians, some nurses or field workers. They spend their lives helping the next generation — and they never ask for a raise."

Floeter, an insurance agent by trade, wasn't interested in buying equipment but figured it wouldn't hurt to read a few books on the topic when his son suggested beekeeping as a hobby. As he read, his fascination grew and appreciation diminished.

Floeter decided that he and his wife, Doreen, could coexist peacefully with the bees. The symbiotic relationship would enhance the couple's ample backyard garden and provide a steady supply of honey, subject to the whims of Mother Nature.

He bought a trio of hives and a honey processing tub second-hand, ordered a few crates of bees from Georgia (25 per \$6,000 bees), and joined the Cranbrook Bee Club, a loosely knit association of professionals and hobbyists.

Five years later his industrious colony still lives in the wooden hives, an assemblage of what look like burlap drawers filled with honeycomb dividers. Like a hotel for transients, the tenants change every six weeks in the spring, summer and early fall as adult bees gather honey for winter and then die. Bees hatched near the end of fall generally live through the winter, although male bees are evicted in order to stretch winter stores.

FLOETER LOST three of his four colonies to sub-zero weather and the invading "greater wax moth" last year. He replenished two of them in the spring and hopes to add a third next year. He also hopes to add a third next year. He also hopes to add a third next year.

Norton Williams, Cranbrook Bee Club coordinator, said the indiscriminate use of pesticides on flowers and insects also has reduced the state's bee population.

"It's a serious problem. Sometimes whole hives are poisoned. I don't know how much of it might actually get into the honey. There's nothing I've read about its effect on people," Williams said.

Cranbrook's honey harvest is 1-5 p.m. weekdays through Oct. 7.

Floeter may leave his meager crop for the bees this fall rather than extract and bottle it as he usually does every year. His wife will make beehive candles.

"We've never sold a pound of it," Floeter said. "Why sell it when you can give it away? Give someone a jar of it and you'll think you've given them the world."

Floeter's stinging two-year record is another source of pride. He drives the bees away from the hives with burning smoke before plugging a gloved hand into their wax and honey fortress.

While working around the hives or in his adjacent vegetable garden, he stays clear of the bees' flight path and away from guard bees lingering at the hives' entrance. A natural barrier of tall shrubs forces the insects to ascend quickly on take-off, avoiding a neighbor's yard.

"ITALIAN BEES are bred for their gentleness. I was stung once in the last two years and that was by a wasp," he said. "Most people panic around bees. If you have your hands at them, the bees become disoriented and as a method of survival they sting."

"Honey bee stings are like fish hooks. If you scrape the top of the sting, the venom sack will come off. I keep medi-

cation here in case anyone is allergic to stings. I've never had to use it."

Both Williams and Floeter agreed that yellow jackets, wasps and hornets often are mistaken for honey bees. That misconception fuels unwarranted fears about the insect, which in turn may result in tighter restrictions on suburban beekeeping.

"Virtually no southeastern Michigan city prohibits keeping bees," said Richard Bruder, a Detroit attorney and member of the Cranbrook Bee Club. "Ann Arbor's ordinances specifically say that no more than two beehives may be kept on property."

Bruder said most cities regulate beekeeping through nuisance ordinances, allowing inspectors or animal control officers to enforce those regulations through a ticketing procedure.

A Redford beekeeper fought his ticket in court, triggering a 1978 Michigan Appellate Court decision which stated that bees, in and of themselves, are not considered a public nuisance. The number of hives, property dimensions, proximity to adjacent dwellings and number of stinging incidents, are factors that help determine if a public nuisance exists in a given situation.

WHEN RESEARCHING bee ordinances last year, Bruder discovered that some police departments, either misinformed or intent on discouraging beekeeping, claimed the hobby was illegal. But when he read the ordinances he found no supporting evidence.

Bruder suggests that prospective beekeepers request a copy of the animal or nuisance ordinances from city hall, before investing in equipment.

Floeter has lectured his grandson's classes about bees and invited youngsters to view his colony. Neighbors haven't complained about the insects, he said.

Thursday, September 27, 1984 O&E

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Orchestra season opens auspiciously

By Arvid Zaromp
special writer

review

Julius Chajes is one of our community's most gifted musicians and one that we are fortunate to have.

Composer, pianist and conductor, he is also the music director of the Center Symphony Orchestra (CSO), located at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. Last Sunday, the CSO presented its first of four concerts of the current, 45th season.

One of the highlights of this program was the performance of some selections by Chajes, the major one being a cantata on the 142nd psalm. This work was performed in dedication to the new Holocaust Memorial Center to be dedicated next month.

This last statement, however, is misleading. The cantata is not a recent composition written for the event, but a piece composed more than 50 years ago, with amazing prophetic insight.

As Chajes related to the audience, the year was 1933, one year before Hitler came to power. Chajes, who foresaw the events that were to happen, urged his family and every Jew who would listen, to leave Austria before it was too late.

While the subsequent happenings are now history, we are now fortunate that Chajes and his family were spared that period's horrors by following through with his hunch and emigrating to Palestine, which is present-day Israel.

THIS BIBLICAL chapter is most appropriate for the event. It expresses gloom and despair, depicted by descending figures in the music, and ends with a hopeful note, depicted by reversed and ascending patterns.

Participants in this event were the Fort Street Chamber Choir and soloists Annette Chajes, mezzo soprano

and wife of Chajes, Edward Kingman, tenor and conductor of the Fort Street Chamber Choir, and Warren Esch, baritone.

Other selections by Chajes were "Hallelujah to My Father" and "Song of Gulliver," the latter being an extremely successful arrangement of an Israeli folk song in the 1940s.

The CSO has been reinforced with a contingent of Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians. This second quality and coordination of this string orchestra was of extremely high caliber. While this could be credited to the DSO presence, the effect on other members was also most beneficial, resulting in a fine effort by every individual.

The first part of the program opened with a Concerto for Viola in G Major by Telemann, with DSO violist Hans Hollman playing the solo part. Hollman opted for the modern technique of playing, with vibrato, rather than the more traditional baroque style.

However, the tons quality and expressiveness that resulted were well worth the slight compromise in stylistic authenticity. Hollman wrote his own cadenzas, which revealed even more than he intended.

THE CADENZAS for the slow movements (first and third) were long and flashy, featuring styles of much later periods, some segments suggesting the cadenzas in the Beethoven and Brahms violin concerti. The technique required was so dazzling that it failed in various places.

This was balanced, however, with his skillful command and articulation in the body of the movements.

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