



February 2023 First Quarter Newsletter: Part 1

Inside this Issue:

- Editor's Musings
- Upcoming Events
- President's Corner
- New MBA Website and Problem Bees
- Dronings from a Queen Bee: Seasonal Stages
- In Memory: Dr. George Ayers
- Gardening for Bees with Lisa Stinson
- Bee Club Buzz - Seven Ponds Shout Out
- Bees in the News - Fight for a pollinator lawn
- District News

And that is not all. Stay tuned for Part 2

Please note: Depending on your email service, you may need to click "view all" or "view entire message" link to see the entire newsletter.

Editor's Musings

Becky Green, MBA newsletter editor



As I am writing this, SE Michigan is finally blanketed in snow, and I have been able to don my cross country skis a few times, and head into the woods to enjoy the amazing hush that snow brings. It is almost as good for the soul as being with the bees. I hope you too have found a way to love winter! Other than when quickly slipping supplemental sugar blocks under inner covers, and one crazy day just after our frigid Christmas,

when the temperature hit the upper 50s and the bees were out in force, I haven't seen much of my bees. Although there is something to be said for catching your

breath after a busy bee season, I miss working my hives. By the time this newsletter gets to you, spring will be near, our bees will have had a chance to head out a time or two and it won't be too long before it is warm enough to do more than a quick peek below the inner cover. So, if you, like me, are missing the bees, hang in there! And, if you haven't already signed up, join us in Lansing on March 11 for the MBA Spring Conference, where you can surround yourself with bee knowledge and beekeepers. Good bee therapy until we can be back with our bees!

Michigan Beekeeper of the Year Correction: Two Beekeeper of the Year awards were presented in 2022 due to a tie in the vote by the selection committee, not due to a decision to award an Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula award, as was incorrectly stated in the 2022 fourth quarter newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Michigan Beekeepers Association Spring Conference

Pre-conference Virtual Webinars: 7-9 pm

March 2 - Marla Spivak

March 7 - Frank Rinkevich/USDA

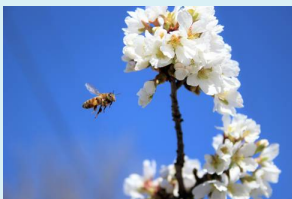
March 9 - Randy Oliver

In-person Conference

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 am - 6:00 pm

MSU Kellogg Center, East Lansing, MI

[Meeting Information and Registration](#)



Trees for bees: From planting to pruning webinar with Mike Connor

Thursday, February 23, 2023 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

2nd Annual Bee Day Festival

May 20th 2023 10am to 4 pm

*A family day
of fun and learning.*

*Meet local
beekeepers and educators*

Hosted by River Raisin Beekeepers Club
3448 N Adrian Hwy, Adrian Mi
St. John Church.

Local vendors, food trucks, fun and games.

Other events of interest:

Pontiac Beginner Bee School 2023 - 12 weeks, Saturdays 11 am, first meeting February 18

Beginning Beekeeping with Barry Fitzpatrick and Jim Anglewicz, at North Central Michigan College, 4 sessions, Mondays, Feb. 27th - Mar. 20th • 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Annual Tri-County Beekeepers Association Spring Workshop - March 3-4

Wildflower Association of Michigan: 36th Annual Michigan Native Plant Conference - March 5

Monarch Gardens Online Classes



President's Corner

From the desk of Rich Wieske, President, MBA

2023 started out on a high note in Tennessee with over 1600 beekeepers at the Hive Life Conference, one of the largest gatherings of beekeepers since Apimondia in Montreal. Many Michiganders made it down, the vendors all loved it, and the crowds were super energized.



The camaraderie was palatable, long lines to get into the building, lines for coffee, for lunch, but wow, everyone one was upbeat and focused on learning more about bees and they had some great speakers, like Bob Binnie, Frederick Dunn, Richard Noel, Etienne Tardif to name a few... Mark your calendars for next year's Hive Life Conference. They sell out early!



Wicwas Press was there, making it's second appearance in two years.



Ned Stoller demonstrating an easy-to-use hive lift.



High tech insemination scope.



A shot of the main hall, it was packed

An interesting part of Hive Life is that the beekeepers are a bit younger. They get their information online and see social media as a sharing exchange. So many podcasters and YouTubers were in attendance. I had several conversations with Michigan beekeepers who knew all about Hive Life in Tennessee, 800 miles away, but had no idea there was a Michigan bee club in their own back yard. Back in the day they said there was a generation gap. Today we may have a social technology gap. I can see this being a major issue for all our clubs, keeping

up with the social media generation.

I came home with several new hives for a pilot project we're working on for the SEMBA bee school yard at Tollgate Farm in Novi, part of MSU Extension. SEMBA is funding our project of turning the existing bee yard into a wheelchair accessible one. I had the great fortune to meet up with several other groups working on similar projects around the country including Monica Schmitt from Mission Beelieve in Maryland and Ned Stoller from The AgrAbility Project (Purdue) who, with Adam Ingrao of Heroes to Hives, will be at our MBA Spring Conference demonstrating all kinds of interesting gadgets and tools for handicapped or other abled folk in the vendor room. They will also be giving a presentation on accessibility in the bee yard, one not to miss. There is a major need for more locations and yards where those using wheel chairs or other mobility assistance can learn beekeeping hands on. I hear a couple of other Michigan clubs are thinking along these lines, so it should be an interesting year.



At the conference I ran into David Peck our keynote presenter for the MBA Spring Conference, (seen here talking with Matt Kobe, left, and James Lee, right.). Hope you are planning to join us on March 11 to hear his talk!



I also ran into Paul Kelly our keynotespeaker at last spring's MBA conference.

The Trees for Pollinator program is moving into hive gear. please place your orders with your local bee club to support them and us.

We were able to line up a series of clubs to host Dewey Caron this summer as he returns from the Eastern Apiculture Society (EAS) meeting in August, starting with SEMBA on Sunday Aug 6, Center of Michigan Beekeepers (COMB) on Monday night, Aug 7, Ann Arbor Backyard Beekeepers (A2B2) on Tuesday, Aug 8, Kalamazoo Bee Club on Wednesday, Aug 9, and Holland Area Beekeepers Association (HABA) on Thursday Aug.10. What a major coup! If you are near these location please stop in as It's hard to find someone as knowledgeable as Dewey.

Speaking of EAS, Rick Dimanin and I have started a discussion with their people to possibly bring EAS to Michigan in 2025, for MBA's 160th anniversary. Looking at possibly U of M Dearborn, with some special historical activities and events at Greenfield Village. Will keep you posted.

This spring I plan on continuing my tour of clubs around the state, with a revisit to Saginaw Valley Beekeepers on Feb 7, and then Feb 11 at Holland's Bee School. No dates yet but do want to visit River Raisin Beekeepers, Middle of the Mitten Beekeepers, Berrien/Cass Beekeepers, Scottville Beekeepers of Mason County and Benzie Bee Guild. I hear we have a new club in Oakland County,

and I do want to revisit Sunrise Side Beekeepers and Lost Nation Beekeepers this year. I have a few miles to cover. Looking forward to meeting as many of you as I can.



It was so cold in Michigan last weekend that our dinosaur turned blue. Go figure!

New MBA Website and Problem Bees

Becky Green, MBA newsletter editor
and the MBA Communication Committee

The Michigan Beekeepers Association website has a new look. If you haven't already seen it, [check it out!](#) The Communication Committee hopes to use the new website to improve communication among MBA members and with the beekeeping community. We are starting small and our first goal is to get and keep our problem bee resources up to date. Here is how you can help us.

Swarm Removal List: If you are interested in being listed on MBA's Swarm Removal List, we have made it simpler to add your name to the list. You must be an MBA member to be listed. Once you are a member, you control whether you are listed by using your MBA profile. To add your name to the Swarm Removal List follow the instructions in [this link](#). Note: It may take a few weeks for your information to appear (or disappear) on the website. If you have questions, please use the contact information at the end of the [swarm list](#) page so we can help!

Cut-Out List: Membership is not required to participate! As I write this, there are no listings for cut-outs, as we are collecting up-to-date information. To that end, if you are an individual or business able to do cut-outs, please share your information with us. You can find email links to do that right from the [Cut-Out Removal page](#) on the MBA website. At a minimum please provide a contact name, business name (if you have one), city and county you are based in, and a contact phone number.

Dronings from a Queen Bee Seasonal Stages

By Charlotte Hubbard, Kalamazoo Bee Club

Beekeeping features some distinct stages, like this current "anticipation of spring" stage. If you've been successfully procrastinating like me, time is running out on repairing and painting hive bodies ... and applying fresh duct tape to the holes in your veil. Lengthening daylight, and little brown spots on snow after a sunny afternoon (colonies still alive!) having me excited about what's coming in a month or two or five. You can't fool Mother Nature, but she sure likes to fool us with fake springs.

Spring, with its magical blooms and glorious birdsong, denotes another distinct stage of beekeeping. The “finally, spring!” stage marks the time to start planning splits, and mentoring a fresh crop of newbees.

I once also had a pristine white bee suit and optimism that I’d have tons of honey to pay for this hobby. My early optimism could also be measured by tons, whereas my early knowledge – mere ounces.

Fifteen years later honey bees still teach me plenty, although (sometimes) I think I know a thing or two about them. As we were once all bee-ginners, I strive to pay back to honor those who so patiently helped me.

Newbee questions are somewhat predictable: Do I start with all five hive bodies in my beginner kit? What’s the difference between a drone and a worker bee? How do you keep a smoker going?

(The answers? (1) No, add them as the colony expands. (2) The beefy bees appearing to wear wrap-around sunglasses are drones, and (3) when you figure out the smoker thing, please tell me.)

The stage of “finally, spring!” is followed by swarming. Even though I’m no longer willing to place a stepladder in the back of a truck, stand with one foot on the top step and brace the other on a spindly branch, I still love swarm season. I recall, and no exaggeration here, the one glorious day of five swarm captures on a golf course while frustrated golfers looked on in fear and interest. That’s different from the day when I captured the same swarm of my bees in my yard, five times. I knew they were mine not only because of the location, but because I mark my queens like a three-year-old. Still got plenty to learn about that also ...



I practice queen-marking on drones. I need much more practice.

There are other stages of beekeeping across the season, like the joyous low varroa count stage (typically earlier in the season), or the equally joyous black locust stage when you need to add honey supers seemingly ever two days. And I’m always amused by the “I know honey bees and you need to come get them” stage, which starts every year about August. For example ...

One sultry August day I got a phone call from a grumpy older man, “Griff”. According to Griff, a nest of honey bees had just made their home inside his shed, and they were stinging the &^% out of him every time he opened the door. He insisted we come get them ASAP.

I was a little taken aback by Griff’s attitude, although I’ve used similar words when I’ve had the &^% stung out of me. My late husband Marshall and I removed unwanted bees on a volunteer basis - IF we had the time and the hammock wasn’t calling. Griff sounded desperate. Before we loaded the truck and drove 30 miles, I asked Griff if he would text me a photo of the nest, and a dead bee if he could find one, so we could confirm they were honey bees, and see the structure.

“Nope,” exclaimed Griff. “Don’t text. Don’t own a cell phone. That’ll eat your brains. And I can tell you’re a spring chicken. Trust me, I’ve been farming longer

than you've been alive and know a honey bee when I see it.”

Out of a respect for my elders and farmers everywhere, we took a leap of faith and loaded the truck with removal equipment. We arrived 40 cross-country minutes later.

Griff greeted us, sort of. He yelled from across the yard that it was about time we got there as he needed the bees gone, and gestured to their location with the business end of the shovel he was using.

On an initial reconnaissance mission, we trudged to the shed through the field of poison ivy, thistle, and the carcasses of rusting farm implements. I would've taken a photo to document the obstacle course, but didn't want to pull out a cell phone lest it eat more of my brain. About 20 feet from the shed we came to a screeching halt.

I'm over a dozen years into beekeeping and still learning plenty. I've been using a cell phone for over a dozen years also, so my brain might not be what it should be. Whatever my mental state, I unmistakably know a very busy wasp nest when I see it.

I dream of cutouts and swarms. This is the stuff of my nightmares.



We let Griff know we wouldn't be removing those insects. Griff let us know, using many other choice words, that we didn't know &^% about honey bees. Believe me, there are days I feel that way about bees. That day wasn't one of them.

We didn't debate Griff, but instead thanked him for caring about pollinators and climbed back in the truck. Travelling home, I threw caution to the wind and used my cellphone to explain supersedure cells to a newbie. And somewhere, in the peak of "I know bees and you need to come get them" season, and before "Varroa counts often soar in September" season, a hammock called to us (thankfully without using a brain-eating cell phone).

In Memory

With the passing of [Dr. George Scott Ayers II, PhD](#), on January 6, 2023, the beekeeping community lost a valued teacher and colleague.

Friend and MSU colleague Dr. Zachary Huang shares some memories.

My first interaction with Prof. Ayers, who insisted I call him George, was in 1997. I had applied for the "extension specialist"



job when it was first advertised by MSU Entomology. George was the chair of the search committee. Right away I could tell he was a straight shooter. You could count on him giving you an honest assessment of what he thought of you or others. In 1998, when I was interviewed for the assistant professor in apiculture job, George invited me to accompany him on a night collection of insect specimens with his students. I had forgotten most of my insect taxonomy, and I was sure I was

not making a favorable impression. However, I was a straight shooter, and simply said I do not know if I did not. Something must have clicked that night, because it turned out to be the beginning of 24 years of friendship.

George and I shared a love for photography. My focus is bees on flowers. George loved to photograph flowers alone. He was much more of a perfectionist than me. Not only would he lug all the gadgets for a perfect picture out to the field (tripod, sliding focuser, flash light, diffuser, etc) , he would also bring flowers back to photograph inside his office or home under more controlled conditions. One year I made the mistake of mentioning to him that MSU had a policy that if one shoots a photo with university equipment, that photo can be copyrighted by the university, not by the photographer. I thought it strange and complained to him. He had not been aware of the policy and immediately started buying personal duplicates of all his MSU photography equipment. It must have cost him A LOT because he only used top-of-the-line digital cameras and lenses, but it was important to him that his pictures be his. MSU later changed that policy but I only learned of that change by accident many years later (I guess one needs to read the faculty handbook once in a while).

George used to have the best office, at the top of the building, with many windows and a great view. One day, as he was nearing retirement, he said “Zach do you want my office?” At the time, his office was huge compared to mine, but thanks to George, for a little while I got the best office. When I gave up that office in order to move with my lab to another building that offered more lab space, I was able to return the favor by moving him into an office next to mine, so we were together again. I also paid to install a window air conditioner for his office. After that he was always telling me “Thank you again for the air conditioner! It is so nice and cool here!” That was George, always gracious for the little favors others did for him.

In 2019, while I was visiting with George at his home, he asked if I would finish his book on American honey plants. This was work he had done over more than 10 years (2004 to 2017) but being such a perfectionist, he never quite finished the book. During the visit he still recognized me but explained that Alzheimer’s had stolen most of his knowledge of plants, and he could not finish it. He gave me a stack of DVDs which had the work he had already done on the book. I have been working on the book the last few years and it may take another few to finish it. I am so honored that my friend, Professor George Ayers, entrusted me with this great endeavor!

Rest in peace, my friend.



George and his wife Sandie.



George explains the honey plants at his property.

Gardening for Bees with Lisa Stinson

Lisa is a member of 7 Ponds Bee Club and has been keeping bees for 8 years. She is currently managing 40 colonies at Fox Hollow Farm in Metamora, Michigan

By no means am I a gardening expert, but I am persistent and I like a challenge. My gardening know-how derives from decades of failures that sparked a determination to succeed. Ever since I began keeping bees, I have been on the hunt for uncommon, multi-purpose flowers that produce pollen and nectar. Over the years, I have succeeded with many that are not the first to appear among internet search results. What follows is a brief description of a few favorite annuals and the features that endear them to me. Keep in mind that in my ideal life I'd love to have gardens worthy of magazine cover photos, but I'd rather spend my spare time with my face in a hive than a flower bed. Therefore, the more a flower can take care of itself, the more I like it. If a flower earns a spot on my list of favorites, you can be sure it is quite capable of working independently, so to speak. Without further ado, I would like to introduce three favorites.



Borage

My experiences with borage, also known as starflower or beflower, drive my opinion that it is thoroughly undervalued, in general and as a honey bee resource. It is a reliable producer with a long bloom time. If you can be diligent about weeding as the plant is getting established, it will choke out weeds for the remainder of the

season. Borage can be used as a cover crop, returning lost nutrients into your soil. Furthermore, if you are also a vegetable gardener, borage serves as a companion plant alongside tomatoes to repel tomato hornworms. For all of these reasons, I keep too much seed on hand to plant in a variety of places, such as planting beds that need a break or ones I run out of time to tend in the spring. The bees work it so extensively, it would be worthwhile to plant it in difficult to mow areas, like a hillside. If you happen to live on multiple acres of land and can devote a significant chunk to growing a large area of it, your bees and your soil will surely benefit.

Phacelia

Often referred to as "Bees' Friend" in seed catalogs, it is indeed. This is an extremely reliable nectar source for honey bees. This is another one that I sow in many places because, like borage, phacelia nourishes depleted soil. When I see phacelia in bloom, I rest a little easier



knowing it's at the bees' disposal. There are some interesting studies to be found that measure the increase in honey produced per acre of phacelia planted. If you don't have that kind of space, it will densely populate smaller planting areas. It's so easy to grow, it is my "go-to" seed when I'm putting together packets to give away to school groups or anyone who says they want to help the bees.



Thai Basil

This herb won me over when I learned that its flavor doesn't deteriorate once it flowers and goes to seed. That means you can plant it for the bees and enjoy the foliage for the duration of the life of the plant. I don't have the most discerning palate, but I am Italian, so I'm picky about my basil. It is more than sufficiently interchangeable with sweet basil. It's also a hearty plant with a

longer growing season than sweet basil. I've planted it along borders in flower beds, just to give the bees ample quantities of it. Neither I nor they have ever been disappointed.

On one hand, I'd like to say, if I have had success with a particular flower, it is likely that anyone can grow it. On the other hand, it's always prudent to research details, such as zone, soil, space and sun requirements, scientific name, varieties and the like. If anything here piques your curiosity, dig further on the internet before you dig in the ground to plant it. To that end, I would be remiss if I didn't conclude with three top-notch online resources:

<https://territorialseed.com/>

<https://www.seedsavers.org/>

<https://www.rareseeds.com/>

Bee Club Buzz

A place to introduce your club, and to share stories about club activities

Seven Ponds Bee Club Shout Out

At the Seven Ponds Bee Club one of our members, Cherish Passeno, started a fundraising campaign to plant bee and pollinator friendly trees. Called "Plant A Bee Tree" she asked for a \$10 donation that would purchase a pollinator friendly tree to be planted by the members of Seven Ponds Beekeeping Club. Through her company and the matching funds from the Real Estate One Charitable Foundation, Cherish was able to raise over \$1,000 for the club's tree purchases. At our Christmas Party Cherish was given the "Top Club Member" award for her efforts.

Preston Zale
Club President

Bees in the News

Fight for a pollinator friendly lawn leads to new state law in Maryland

News story submitted by Michele Armstrong, MBA secretary

Summary written by Becky Green, MBA newsletter editor

After a neighbor complained, Janet and Jeff Crouch of Columbia, Maryland were ordered by their homeowner association to replace the plants in their wildlife friendly yard with grass. They were told they had 10 days to convert their front yard into a lawn that looked like everyone else's. Per the association, the Crouches' plantings violated the association bylaws and hurt property values.

The conflict reflects on an ongoing argument between lawn traditionalists who place value on unblemished, weed-free grass lawns and those who view those same grass lawns as environmentally toxic, devoid of food or shelter for local wildlife in the face of plummeting insect, bird and wildlife populations and overly dependent on pesticides, herbicides and water. The moderators of many of these disputes are homeowners associations', which govern millions of homeowners nationwide. Generally, these associations are tasked with making sure that yards are appropriately maintained, but there are growing questions about what exactly that means.

The Crouches were not ready to give up without a fight. They hired a lawyer and contacted every wildlife and environmental group they could think of, along with local legislators. Ultimately, a Maryland state representative asked if they would allow their case to form the basis of a new environmental law. The measure gained bipartisan support, passed with nearly unanimous support, and became law in October 2021. Many states have passed legislation to promote the health of pollinators, which include bees, wasps, bats and butterflies, while some have limited the authority of homeowners associations to enforce their rules during droughts, but the Maryland law was the first in the country to limit homeowners associations control over eco-friendly yards.

[Read more about it in the Daily Mail](#)

District News

District 4

Heather Boerema, District 4 representative

The first quarter has been an exciting ride as far as the weather goes for the bees. Christmas weekend brought a blizzard and New Year's Day brought spring weather with feet of snow melting away in a day. It has been generally a mild winter so far. I have not heard of any major losses through the grapevine thus far.



Fremont Area Beekeepers

Meetings are the third Thursday of the month at 6 pm March through October only. Check [Fremont Area Beekeepers](#) group on Facebook for more information on meetings and location.

Grand Rapids Area Beekeepers. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm-9 pm. Meetings are at the Home School Building (HSB) at 5625 Burlingame Ave SW, Wyoming, MI. Room #2.

The February 1 meeting was packed! At the beginning of the meeting the club had a raffle and auction with donated bee-related items. Great idea and fun for all! A great way to raise money for the club to help pay for speakers and facility rental. Thanks to Don Lam for an informative and practical presentation on packages, nucs and the equipment needed to start a beekeeping adventure.



Grand Rapids Area Beekeepers Feb 1 meeting

Holland Area Beekeepers Association.

Check hollandbees.org for details on meeting dates and locations. Meeting times 6:30 pm gather, 7 pm-8:15 pm presenter followed by Q and A. HABA will hold a Bee school on February 11 at .GVSU Frederick Meijer Campus It is a sold out event with 100 attendees!! The Holland area. Bee School has a track for beginner beekeepers or those considering considering beekeeping and an intermediate track for more experienced beekeepers. It features keynote speakers, and breakout sessions with topics offered throughout the day. Vendors provide the option of getting your beekeeping supplies right there. It s a great event so keep an eye out for it in February of 2024.

Muskegon Area Beekeepers Club

Meetings are on the first Thursday of the month January through November ; 5:30 pm-7:30 pm.

Muskegon Conservation District, 4735 Holton Rd., Twin Lake, MI 49457

Scottville Beekeepers of Mason County

District 8

Bernie Driggs, District 8 Representative



The Copper Country Beekeeping Club met on Tuesday, January 3 at 6:00 pm at the Portage Lake District Library on the waterfront in Houghton. We usually meet at the Carnegie Museum, but because of some remodeling work taking place, we met at the Library this month.

Local pediatrician and beekeeper, Dr. Cathy Azzarello, gave a very informative presentation on the health and medical benefits of honey and other honey bee products.

One of our members created a new Club logo that we will use for marketing and branding purposes.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 7. Our program will feature Dan Grandy of Grand-Bees Honey in L'Anse. His topic will be Raising Queens.

Pete Cattelino

Northwoods Beekeepers

So far, we have had a mild winter with only 10-11 inches of snow on the ground and daytime temperatures just above freezing, making ideal conditions for checking our hives. It is a great time to feed sugar patties or fondant if the bees are getting low on stores. I have had many reports that for the most part our bees are doing fine. There have been some losses, but as we go through winter, we hope the numbers stay low. The hardest thing about inspecting and feeding bees in a north woods winter is getting through the almost knee-deep snow just to get to the hives.

Our upcoming list of speaking events is growing fast and it looks like another busy year for our club members.

- We are scheduled to participate in a "Home and Garden Show" taking place April 14-16 in Escanaba, MI.
- We will be at the Dickinson County Library in Iron Mountain this spring for the last of our three-part series, this one titled "Pollinators."
- This year's "Beginning Beekeeping Workshop" will be on Saturday, February 18 from 1:00-4:00 pm at Crossroads Alliance Church in Norway, MI. We have offered this free workshop since 2016 and have refined and tweaked it every year. This will be our best ever!!!
- Our first meeting in 2023 will be on March 1, at Dickinson County Library Iron Mountain.

Bernie Driggs



Keep a look out for part 2 - coming soon!

**Visit our
Website**

Call for Submissions

Do you have an interesting beekeeping story or picture to share?
Would you like to introduce your club or share some club news?
Have you read an amazing bee book that you would like to tell us
about?

If so, we would love to have the opportunity to put it in the MBA
newsletter. The newsletter is published quarterly and the submission
deadline for the next newsletter is **May 8, 2023**.

Email submissions to: newslettereditor@mba-bees.org
Please include your name, address, best contact phone number and
preferred email address with your submission.

***Editor's note: I reserve the right to edit all submissions as needed,
including editing for content, grammar, length, etc. Although I will try to
include all appropriate submissions, some may need to be declined or
publication delayed in the event there is an abundance of submissions.
Submissions received after the posted deadline will be considered for the
next newsletter.***

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