

Farm Profile Presentation

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**Tony
&
Sandra
Phillips**



Time Frame

- moved to our property in Debert in 1973
- got first bees -3 packages - in 1974
- first blueberry “crop” 750 pounds in 1974
- our blueberry receiver asked to rent our hives starting 1975
- increased our hives to about 80 by 2000, renting for blueberries and selling off hives along the way to keep numbers manageable (day job)
- retirement imminent, upped numbers to over 200 as pollination demand grew. We sold nucs every year. We have never bought bees except for packages when we started in the 70’s and once about 2010. But we buy queens every year to make nucs.
- Until about 2000 we extracted our own honey, but since then a neighbour has done our extracting. Sandra continues to do all the final filtering and packaging.
- We sell 50+ nucs a year, rent hives for pollination and sell most of our honey retail
- have done some indoor wintering since 1990, usually nucs ...but none this winter

2018 snapshot from Annual Beekeeper Registration form

- **Operated 124 hives in 9 bee yards in summer of 2018**
- **140 colonies into winter 2017, 130 alive in spring of 2018**
- **121 colonies operated in summer of 2018, 124 put into winter**
- **121 colonies for honey production, 61 pound average**
- **1650 pounds wholesaled, 4300 pound retailed**
- **96 hives rented for blueberry pollination**
- **73 nucs sold**

The good luck factor

- **Location ...far from coast**
- **Blueberry pollination became popular in our time**
- **Learned skills when bees were cheap**
- **No serious disease issues while learning**
- **Fortunate in my neighbour: knowledgeable, helpful in purchasing**
- **Close to blueberry country ...short runs ... no all-nighters**

The “Aha” moment

- **1989 six week family trip to England, Sandra and I and three kids**
- **When we figured expenses, we realized our bee and honey income for that year had covered the cost of the trip ...we didn't go in the hole**
- **Our farm income ideas had started in the 70's with pulp, log and firewood sales from our woodlot**
- **Then morphed to blueberries as we cleared blueberry land and it grew in**
- **Then shifted in the last ten years to beekeeping as we enjoyed success and developed several income streams**

The game-changer



The Perfect Truck

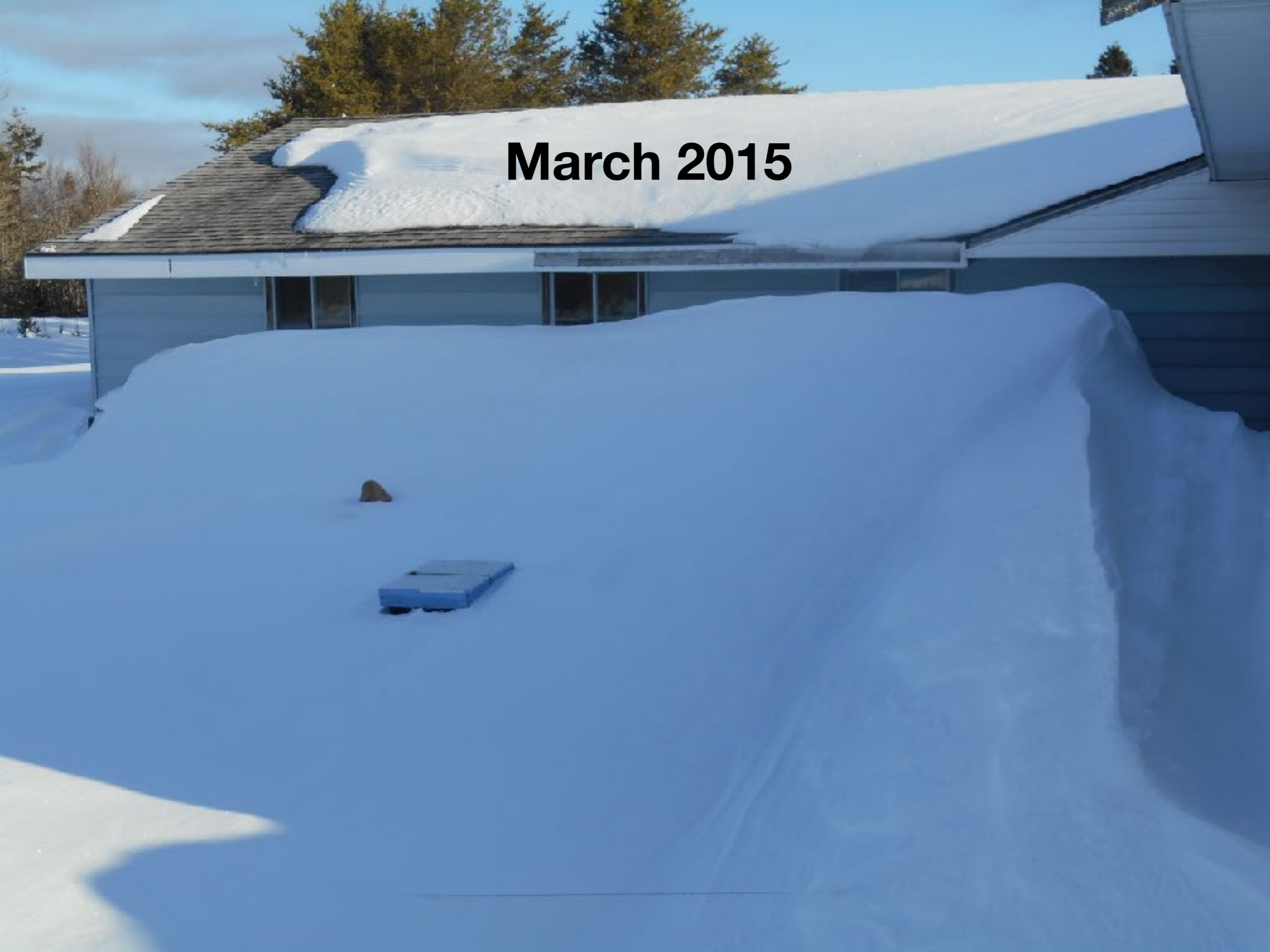


... but only in China

Efficiencies

- **the strapper ... beats hell out of hive staples ...the old way ...lift from the top ... save your back**
- **extracting: me ...800 pounds a day in a virtual sauna;
my neighbour: six tons a day, no sweat**
- **the lift gate ... first there was the homemade crane, then the lift gate combined sometimes with a hand cart ...hand balming will usually get the light spring hives out there, but for moving heavy hives to summer yards and then to winter yards after feeding became much easier**

March 2015



The nuc experiment ... about 15 years ago



**Drone comb ... a brief
flirtation**



Image at left shows hive temperature behind bubble wrap 72.7 F, which was more than 20 degrees above the ambient temperature when I did this experiment.



Image at right gives a reading of the brood nest area in Celsius ... with that reading you can be sure this hive is brooding up



A close-up photograph showing a person's hands using a clear zip-loc bag to feed syrup into a wooden crate. The person is wearing a green long-sleeved shirt. The crate is made of light-colored wood slats and has a blue-painted exterior. The person is holding the bag with their left hand and using a small metal tool to pierce the bag with their right hand. The bag is placed over a hole in the crate. The background is dark.

Feeding syrup with a zip-loc bag ...
some good wisdom from Ontario
tech transfer

**A fertilizer tote liner
makes a good containment
for acetic acid fumigation
of nosema contaminated
frames.**



Alcohol wash to check for varroa infestation. I favour summer use of mite wipes if indicated and temperatures favourable.



The bear reached over the fence ...
hives not set in far enough



Draft stop ...bringing the pallet wrap up over the inner cover seam



Some take-aways

- **Make bees when bees want to make bees ... May thru July.**
- **More is better ... usually ten hives can live where two can live, and when you get your skills up it doesn't take much more time, and your operation will be much more robust.**
- **The 20/80 rule RULZ ... 20% of your hives will gobble 80% of your time, so ... eliminate poor hives and replace them with easy-to-make May and June hives ...anticipate losses.**
- **Use your swarm cells, make walk away splits, buy local queens or make your own.**
- **Hang out. When starting, I learned more from Don Dunbar in ten minutes than all the reading I'd done up til then ... and the reading made more sense after.**
- **Caveat: Smart idea to raise your own queens. I don't ...tried briefly... not a finesse guy. You can make nucs and make increase more efficiently with raised queens than walk-aways. I chose to farm sloppy. Works for me.**

Beekeeping Class AC's The Modern Beekeeper



I have participated in the teaching of a number of beekeeping courses and really recommend it. A bit of income for sure, but more importantly, a great chance to meet other keen people and learn from their experience and questions. Teaching forces you to reflect on and review what you are doing and make sure that your actions can be described and communicated.



Some Personal Quirks, Hobby Horses and Afterthoughts

- **Hive wrapping with bubble wrap (top super) and pallet wrap (whole hive). I make the wrap so the hive is accessible for spring time manipulations without prejudicing the insulation or the wrap.**
- **Kohler door cut-outs to make telescopic cover ...gives two inches of insulation year round**
- **No queen excluders, and take away top entrance in summer.**
- **Make buildings as large as you can ...use trusses, so interior space is flexible. (I didn't do that.)**
- **Concentrate on bees before extraction hardware.**
- **Consider comb honey if you want to stay small.**
- **Include a loading ramp if you can.**
- **I use formic mite wipes as necessary with honey supers on in summer ...low mite levels help with successful wintering and getting a fall honey crop.**
 - **Currently, I favour Apivar application around mid-March.**

