

"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."

— Warren Buffett

North Carolina beekeepers are a very fortunate bunch. We have what is probably the best state inspection service in the country with the best full-time, professional inspectors. (See "[Who Ya Gonna Call?](#)") We have the largest and oldest state beekeeping association, which puts on two high-quality conferences a year and offers a variety of educational, service and marketing programs to its members. (See "[What's the NCSBA Good For?](#)") We have 83 county beekeeping associations that offer bee schools, monthly educational meetings and local support and encouragement.

This deep and broad network didn't happen by random chance. At its core is the Extension Apiculturist and the Apiculture Program at NCSU. In 1915, the USDA's Bureau of Entomology "assigned an expert apiculturist [George H. Rea] temporarily to this State to survey the beekeeping conditions and needs. As a result, a cooperative plan was agreed upon by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State Extension Service for the employment of an extension specialist in beekeeping [C.L. Sams], to be located in the Division of Entomology, State Department of Agriculture, Raleigh."¹ Shortly after he began his work, the NCSBA was formed (1917), with Dr. Sams as its first vice-president. He was hired fulltime by North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering (now NCSU) in 1925.

NCSU, the Extension Apiculturist and a long line of apiculture professors have served NC beekeepers very well over the past 100 years; a nice summary by Dr. David Tarpy is in the [Winter 2017 Bee Buzz](#). But what about the next 100 years? What could happen when Dr. Tarpy eventually retires?

¹ [First Manual of the North Carolina State Beekeepers Association](#), NCSBA, December 1917, p 3.

Money From Bees²

Ervin Hill, a 4-H club boy of Deep Run, Route 1, Lenoir County, started a beekeeping project in 1937 with four colonies of bees. That year he produced 257 pounds of honey from which he paid all expenses, added four new colonies and cleared \$18.63.

In 1938 he harvested 820 pounds of honey from the eight colonies and sold it for \$124.75. After paying all expenses, he cleared \$115.31 net profit.

In 1939, he harvested 717 pounds of honey which he sold for \$107.50. After paying expenses, he had left a profit of \$100.32.

During the three years, therefore, Ervin made a profit of \$234.46 from the bees at little cost, for little labor, and from interesting work. C.L. Sams, beekeeping specialist, says the boy managed his bees well, kept them in modern hives and followed modern methods of disease control.

The advice we got from NCSU's apiculture professor 83 years ago sounds similar to the expert advice we get from the same source today. Who will we turn to in years ahead?

If the experience of neighboring states is any guide, the answer to that question is, "just about anything." Those of us who have been around for a few years remember Dr. Mike Hood, Dr. Tarpy's counterpart at Clemson University. Dr. Hood and his lab were responsible for cutting-edge apiculture research, including inventing such things as the Hood Beetle Trap when the Small Hive Beetle first appeared in South Carolina. Clemson hired a replacement after Dr. Hood's retirement in 2013, but the University was really no longer interested in honey bees. Within five years, the apiculture program was shut down and now South Carolina has no dedicated support for its beekeepers.

Could that happen in North Carolina? If we are relying on the everlasting enthusiastic and unwavering support of the state legislature and the NCSU trustees, we should take a cold, hard look at how priorities quickly change with

² F.H. Jeter, State College Extension Editor, published in *The Southern Planter* magazine, 1940. <https://ruralInchistory.blogspot.com/2011/06/life-on-farms-in-1940s.html>

shifting demographics, commercial and political trends. There is nothing at all, other than a tradition that few Normal People are aware of, that suggests North Carolina would continue its focus on apiculture once the current players move on.

But there is a solution, a rock-solid option that would guarantee that our interests are supported forever. A professorship in apiculture at NCSU can be permanently and irrevocably established by creating what is called an endowed Distinguished Professorship. Essentially, donors give the university a trust fund that pays for a professorship in perpetuity, under the conditions that the donors dictate. This arrangement may sound odd but about 25% of all professorships at NCSU are funded by this type of arrangement. Special interest groups such as textiles and engineering firms are examples of who pays for them. They want to ensure that North Carolina is at the forefront of those industries, forever, and this is the means of achieving that.

As I was preparing this article, I came across an example of an endowed Distinguished Professorship recently created at my alma mater, UNC-Greensboro. An extremely wealthy patron has endowed a Distinguished Professorship in Innovation. The first recipient will be a professorship in esports. That's not a typo: it is "esports", where overgrown children play video games in big competitions. The University says, "This professorship will enable UNCG to recruit and retain academic luminaries in cutting-edge fields, like esports, in perpetuity."³

The critical take-away message here is the secular variant of the golden rule: "Those with the gold make the rules." We don't have to choose between an eternity with Nintendo competitions versus one with bee-pollinated foods such as apples, cucumbers and almonds, but if we are going to have the first, why can't we also have the second?

All this leads up to the fact that if we, as concerned beekeepers, want to make the rules

that will dictate the future of our passion, we must come up with some gold. But there are a whole lot of us, over 4,500 people in NCSBA and likely well over three or four times that many who keep bees but aren't members. So for each person we are talking about maybe part of a gold coin, not a gold bar. And we only need to talk about this at all if we care what happens.

The total cost of an endowed Distinguished Professorship of Apiculture at NCSU is \$1 million, but we beekeepers don't have to foot the entire bill. If two-thirds of the amount is given (\$667,000), NCSU has funds to round it up to a full \$1 million. NCSBA has formally pledged to come up with \$250,000 within five years (equivalent to roughly \$10 per member per year). NCSU's College of Agriculture & Life Sciences has promised to help find corporate and other donors to make up the balance. Lots of groups want to see us succeed.

North Carolina's beekeepers are known for making things happen. We wanted a world-class honey bee exhibit at the North Carolina Zoo and that's what we now have. We wanted a modern, spacious apiculture research facility and we successfully lobbied to get that funded. Now we've set our sights on ensuring that our children and children's children can live in a state that continues to be the envy of the world with respect to the high-quality academic research and real-world applied extension work that is done here.

Can you give \$10 per year for the next five years so that you can say with pride that you helped secure the future of NC apiculture? Information on the endowment campaign and how to give can be found on the NCSBA website (<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/ncsu-endowed-professorship>).

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³ *UNCG Magazine*, Fall 2022, vol 24, no. 1, pp. 4-5.