

With EAS (Eastern Apicultural Society conference) coming to Vermont this year, and many inquiries coming in from customers and friends who are members, I've decided it's time for me to post in a public place my own explanation of why I'm not participating in the meeting, and also why I dropped out of the Vermont Beekeepers Association, after being active for many years and attending almost every meeting since I moved here permanently in 1986.

I haven't had much connection with EAS in the past, despite invitations to attend and present over many years. This has nothing to do with any judgement on my part about the organization and was due entirely to the relentless attention required in the apiary during my summer season--especially in the early years--and my own need to do something other than bees in the small amount of free time I have during the warm weather. When the arm twisting finally got the better of me, and I attended the 2009 convention in Ellicottville, N.Y., I found it to be a wonderful meeting with great presentations and non-judgemental appreciation of varied philosophies and methods. I especially enjoyed the mix of beekeepers--hobby, commercial and research-- and their relaxed comraderie and desire to share. The atmosphere was much friendlier and non-territorial than I've experienced at some of the state and national meetings. I recommend the EAS conference to all beekeepers, and I have no doubt the Vermont meeting will be at least the equal of those put on in the past.

I'm going to describe my own reasons for not attending EAS in Vermont in three sections. The first is the shortest possible summary that I consider to be accurate and inclusive. Some might want to skip the rest and move on to the following, more positive, essays--and I don't blame you.

The second part is a more detailed description of what has happened over a longer period of time. The aim here is to make my own position--popular or not--as clear as possible; to prevent other hard-working and decent people from being victimized the same way that I was; and to show that these issues are far larger than just my own case.

The third part is my attempt to answer some of the criticisms I've heard through the grapevine, but which have never been brought to me directly; and how they might lead to something positive.

Part One:

If I have made a small success with honeybees, it was achieved by working steadily and ignoring the advice and perspective of all kinds of modern, certified experts and well established beekeepers. I was guided instead by the bees themselves, by the old-time beekeepers--through their books and by using the same tools and equipment they used--and by studying the work of outstanding farmers who guided the energy of Nature into a harmonious outcome, instead of fighting against it. The other essays on this website are my attempt to document this process so that other people who want to pursue this path can proceed more quickly and easily than I did. All this attracted a fair amount of positive attention from people concerned about the bees' current predicament, the future of agriculture, and our culture's adversarial relationship with Nature. But, as always happens when an existing paradigm is challenged, it caused resentment as well--including among some of Vermont's other commercial beekeepers.

It may have been inevitable that I would eventually come into conflict with at least some of this small group of people--though I tried my best to avoid it. In 1986-1990, I was the last person to establish commercial bees in this state, where the small area of good territory was already crowded with beeyards. Worse than that though, I brought a different perspective, and different aims and methods to Vermont's beekeeping scene. Much of my inspiration, values and methods of working I learned from my mentors. This group included some of the rarest of all people in our society: families that--through independent thinking, attention and steady work--made a really happy and comfortable life for themselves on farms considered tiny by American standards. They taught me how to work and think at the same time, and no one ever received a more valuable gift. This made a very stark contrast with the attitudes dominating Vermont commercial beekeeping at that time. This group's aims, methods and ethics came directly from other businesses---far more harmful and destructive than farming or beekeeping. Different approaches and philosophies co-existed much more easily before the arrival of tracheal and varroa mites--when commercial beekeepers faced escalating levels of challenge and stress which brought out both the best and the worst in individuals and groups.

I understand and even welcome controversy and resentment as part of the process of challenging a paradigm that's not working anymore. But when in this case resentment escalated into theft and--if stalking, tracking, and intimidation at my home constitute violence--then into violence as well, I had to lose any and all trust and respect for some of my beekeeping neighbors and withdraw from the Vermont Beekeeper's Association and any venue where they might be present. It took an enormous amount of attention, physical and mental work, and anxiety to move my apiary, and my only source of income, from the dead end road of continuous treatments to a healthier and more creative system without treatments--at a time when there were no good examples to follow and almost everyone predicted a complete failure.

After doing such an exhausting piece of work, and then being confronted by such a situation, I really didn't know how to respond. Stealing someone else's bees is about the most despicable thing one beekeeper can do to another. I'm not a public oriented person, and being stalked, tracked, and staked out at my home by disgusting sociopathic characters, with the sole purpose of intimidating me was extremely upsetting to say the least. What hurt me the most, however, was that beyond the one or two people willing to do this dirty work, there was a larger group who were happy to use this situation as a way of marginalizing me rather than coming to me directly with whatever concerns they may have had. (See Part Three). This all began even before I was convinced that my plan and years of work had any real long term strength or stability; and after I had for several years voluntarily supplied these same beekeepers with many hundreds of queen cells. None of these people lifted a finger to learn to raise their own queen cells during this time, and the same cells that helped move my apiary out of treatments amounted to exactly squat in their apiaries. There was only one Vermont beekeeper who simply came to me and asked if he could learn my system. I gave him every assistance, as I would have done with anyone, and he used my model and a lot of hard work to create a new system of his own, which is now very strong and resilient, and which I'm sure will be on prominent display for EAS. The others have probably had enough time to realize that there is no easy way to obtain a strong and resilient apiary through theft or connivance--it has to be re-created anew by each individual owner, and reflect his or her own unique devotion to steady work and attention.

Part 2:

I don't want to have any misunderstanding about my opinion of, and relationship with, one of the Vermont beekeepers; who is capable of stealing another beekeeper's bees, stalking and tracking other people, making everyone's business his own--whether they approve or not--and moving effortlessly to intimidation if cajolery is not yielding his desired results. I never had to deal with someone even remotely like this before I came to Vermont, and had no desire to do so, but by becoming his target, I was forced to search, and finally learn that this syndrome is actually quite well known, well studied and predictable.

Among the Vermont beekeepers there is one museum-quality sociopath--complete with multiple personalities, delusional self-importance, an endless list of female victims, and no respect for anyone's privacy or property. His mind was ruined long ago by the same drugs he's used to win support from--and diminish the lives of--countless associates over many years. My red flags should have gone up when I first heard of him even before I moved to Vermont. A friend's sister had been involved with him, during which time her inheritance had all somehow managed to disappear. As a testament to his ability to deflect blame from himself, my friend blamed her sister, so I had no suspicions when he began his sucking up and patronizing routine

My Apology to EAS---March 2012

Written by KirkWebster

even before I left Massachusetts. Like so many others, I was fooled and entertained by the mask he put on for my benefit; the constant insistence that what I was doing was just unbelievably wonderful, and the more subtle insistence on my gratitude that he, as some special arbiter of the universe, had approved.

It didn't take long to ascertain that he was not playing with a full deck, and that his beekeeping was just a front for all kinds of other activities. But still it seemed harmless enough--he only appeared occasionally and didn't stay long. Eventually though, he made the mistake of trying to recruit me into his little gang of thieves and delinquents. I must have seemed like an easy target. I had things he wanted (bees, the ability to work, respect and trust in the larger community, and lots of interesting connections), I lived alone, and didn't take part in a lot of public events. Little by little, he began revealing more and more of his other activities. Any tacit acceptance of him on my part ended when he began describing how much fun it is to track people and spy on their personal lives. I decided to have nothing more to do with him when he announced one day that I was going to provide a false alibi for him. I ended all contact with him, and began locking my doors for the first time, when things of interest to him started disappearing from my house--all things I would have given to any honest person who asked for or needed them.

And so began the switch to stalking and intimidation, and the activation of a police file and no-trespassing orders--which don't amount to much except a public notice that I want nothing to do with this person. Some of his other, more recent tactics have been: 1) to find girlfriends or connections with people who live near my home or where I work, in order to have a legitimate reason for being there; 2) to explain all my "crimes" to others who might be recruited to his cause and; 3) to praise me to the sky in public and where there are people who won't be recruited to the cause. If there's anything actually capable of gagging a maggot, this must be it.

The reason for telling this story with a few more details is to encourage others to protect themselves where I was unable to. I have been more than extremely fortunate with my acquaintances and associates, and I had no conception of the sociopath, how they operate, and how common they are. Now I unfortunately understand the syndrome all too well, and I warn everyone to be very careful with those who are overly eager to "help" you. The sociopath has no fixed identity, and will effortlessly adopt a new set of standards and interests if it will help them to get what they want. They inhabit each identity so completely that they can pass lie detector tests by moving from one to another. The vast majority of sociopaths are men. The constant, enormous energy expended to insist that they are "helping" you, or someone else--or the

world--masks their only real agenda and purpose--to manipulate other people and live off of their energy, resources, connections and money. It's interesting that the Amish, who are so wise in the ways of living outside our destructive culture, also use the very best and simplest way of evaluating a new acquaintance among "the English", (which is how they refer to the rest of us). If you're lucky enough to engage them in a real conversation, the first chance they get they will ask: "How do you make a living?" By asking that question, and then finding out whether the answer is accurate or not, you can learn a lot about a person's character right at the outset.

There are laws against theft, stalking, peeping and various kinds of intimidation, and I assume this means that most people consider them despicable and not part of a decent society. Being subject to these things was very upsetting to me, but what hurt me even more was when some of Vermont's other commercial beekeepers would not support me in this case, and actively supported my antagonist. It was only then that I realized how much resentment had built up around what I was doing with bees in Vermont, and that my attempts to have a real friendship with all or most of the Vt. commercial beekeepers had nearly completely failed. Later several messages were sent to me one way or another that I could be part of the community again if I'd go back to being "friends" with my antagonist. Sorry, I don't have any phony friendships and I'm not about to start now. And I would never be part of any community that used or condoned theft, stalking, tracking or other forms of intimidation as a part of the pursuit of beekeeping or anything else.

The use of these tactics in such a vicious and harmful way, instead of simply coming to me directly with any legitimate concerns, made me strongly suspect that the intent was to drive me out of Vermont, and I actually considered leaving for awhile. But I decided to stay here where Nature still has the upper hand; where I have many friends and where the two boys I helped to raise are making really good lives for themselves. Where the community in general is very interested in, and supportive of my work, and where I don't believe I've done anything wrong. My only quarrels are with a very few and who can live anywhere without that? If you like the winter and have a good job, Vermont could be the best place to live in the U.S., or maybe in the world. But in every paradise, there are always at least a few troubles, and this is no exception.

I want to be perfectly clear on one issue: I reject and condemn the drug culture, with all of its

aims, methods, and results. Watching Vermonters over decades convinced me that, except for the few people who really do need it as a medicine, marijuana never really benefits anyone in the long run. Along with America's other two favorite narcotics--electronics and unearned income--we're a long way toward creating a "master" race that knows everything, but has no moral compass, and can't put the pieces together or do anything. Everyone needs to be a parasite on someone else. The exceptional combination of circumstances that shaped the nature and innate abilities of this state's residents sometimes make one feel that Vermont could have succeeded where England failed. But the three favorite narcotics have eaten away much of that potential and often trapped Vermont as a nice place to live, but also a great hotbed of mediocrity.

You don't get pleasure, energy or insight from drugs: rather the drugs allow you to borrow these things from the future. Some people in this business have borrowed heavily and are now deep in debt. The real problem is not the presence of drugs, but the fact that so many people find much of their lives meaningless and without hope for the future. If your everyday life and work don't have meaning, excitement and purpose, then escape and living off of others will always be more attractive than reality and self-reliance. I now consider this whole problem to be the biggest obstacle to solving our current (and future) beekeeping problems, among many others. My first wish is that, when this essay is done, I can return full-time to the problems of making a good life from the wonders of reality, and helping others do the same.

Part Three:

Before closing I would like to respond to some criticisms that have reached me through the grapevine, and bring out some pure speculation as to their real origin:

1. *Kirk is not sharing with the community, and keeps his results to himself for his own benefit.*

□ It is necessary to have some separation from the ridiculous, self-important and nature-destructive mindset that dominates our culture in order to solve our current biology problems. And I can see how this could sometimes be interpreted as aloofness or non-cooperation. However, it was always my aim to share everything I learned first with Vermont beekeepers, and then with the larger community. I demonstrated everything I

learned--as soon as I was convinced it had any value--first in Vermont, and then tried to describe my methods in detail for the greater community by writing about them. I gave demonstrations every year, first for my customers, and later open to everyone. I only stopped them because they were seen as competition with Vt. Beekeeper Association events. I always love meeting other beekeepers in their home territory, but I'm not a great traveller, and this small apiary--which is my only source of income--requires steady attention almost year-round. For these reasons I've always focused on writing as the way to reach the most beekeepers in the shortest amount of time.

2. Kirk has stolen beeyards from other beekeepers.

There was one beeyard I obtained from my attacker, who asked me during his suck-up phase whether I would like to take over one of his beeyards, and I said well, there is one place near my house that would make a good nuc yard. When I ended my association with him years later, I should have moved out of the yard as a matter of course, but frankly his other beeyards presented from the road the appearance that no one was keeping bees there anymore, and it never even occurred to me that he might stay in the bee business. I moved out of there a couple of years later when I realized my mistake. In another case I relocated a beeyard after a farm changed hands. When in the fall I could see my bees were robbing somewhere close by, I moved the bees out the following spring.

Other than these two cases, I was always very careful and proud that I established a small apiary in a crowded territory without overstocking the nectar resource anywhere and without a single complaint being brought to me or the bee inspector as far as I know.

3. Kirk's bees belong to the other Vt. beekeepers because we "allowed" him to come here and helped him get established.

and/or

□□ *Kirk did some good things with bees, but he never would have succeeded without charity from others.*

□□□□ These are my favorites. If I was "allowed" to come here by anyone, no one even mentioned it to me for twenty years. And yes, I did have some help moving my bees here from Massachusetts by one of the beekeepers with his truck; and I worked on building his honey house as part of the trade. I also traded work in the spring for honey extraction with another beekeeper. The frames of honey and brood I received (and greatly appreciated) from them on two separate years of heavy losses might have been compensated by the hundreds of queen cells I gave them for years without even counting. And oh yes, another fellow who got hundreds of cells over many years did drop off a package of venison every now and then. And that pretty much covers it.

As I mentioned earlier, I wasn't even sure that what I was doing was working or had lasting merit when I realized that some of my neighbor beekeepers would steal the stock they wanted rather than just ask for some. Up to that point I had given some worthwhile stock to everyone who had asked and was serious about trying and propagating it. I also had a plan in mind to make eggs available to all Vermont or local beekeepers who wanted to raise queens of their own from them, (though this was before many Vermont beekeepers had learned to raise cells). But I was too hurt and disgusted to continue with any of this after queens were stolen from my beeyards. The plain truth is that any good stock can be bought for a tiny fraction of the cost of developing it, and for a tiny fraction of what the bees will be worth when they are propagated up. All decent beekeepers are happy to pay the small price to the people who developed a good stock and raised the queens. Some of the Russian-based apiaries that now function without treatments were originally established and stabilized with literally four (4) queen bees as grafting mothers. Most of the work and expense of maintaining a healthy, untreated apiary lies in propagating up and selecting down each generation--not in obtaining the initial breeding stock. To succeed you must do the whole program, not just part of it. If the energy some beekeepers spend on conniving, theft, and shaking others down was devoted to doing their own problem solving and plain old-fashioned beekeeping, many of our problems would have been solved long ago.

In the end the only real reasons I can come up with for my harassment are: basic human jealousy and self-importance; the stress caused by changing paradigms and the rapid spread of bee pests and diseases; and the effects of the drug culture on the larger community. I have just two responses: 1) If you need and feel you deserve attention above other people, it helps if you actually accomplish something that people need and are having trouble doing themselves; and 2) My entire conviction is that anything I've discovered or recovered about how to harness the restorative power of Nature is only the tiniest tip of the iceberg, and that the rest of it can only be

uncovered when many people work on and think about it in the best way.

4. *Kirk doesn't come to meetings because he's depressed.*

There are only two things in the world that make me depressed. The first is watching the beautiful Creation being destroyed by peoples' greed and ignorance; and second is the presence of a few members of the Vermont beekeeping community.

So, I apologize to EAS and the Vermont beekeepers for not attending their meetings, and for being so small-hearted and small-minded. It has nothing to do with the organizations or the huge majority of the members. As to whether I'm depressed or not, I invite anyone interested to visit my new home and workshop after EAS 2012 and make your own determination. I've set aside Saturday morning, August 18 from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM for EAS members. After being at the conference all week, you must be prepared to be completely underwhelmed. 1437 South St., New Haven, Vt. 05472

□□□□ I wish you all a great season in 2012.

□□□ Here are a few photos of building the new shop and house buildings in 2011:

{gallery}Photos/eas{/gallery}