

# Dronings from a Queen Bee

## My Drone

By Charlotte Hubbard

Long-term faithful readers may recall that I lost my husband Tom in 2009.

Tom and I always found that expression of “losing” someone amusing. It suggests that, like misplaced keys or a cell phone, the object may show up if you just keep looking.

It sure would be wonderful, handy and awesome if Tom showed up!

Of course, it'd also be a little awkward, because I began dating about a year after Tom passed away.

I dreaded dating again after nearly three decades of marriage, but wanted to find someone with whom to share my life. Our kids had moved out and on with their lives. My dog, two cats, and half-million winged insects were great companions, but not easy to take to a movie. Getting gussied up and getting out to meet strangers was hard, but it was something that needed to be done. I figured there would be years of getting gussied up and out before I found the next Mr. Charlotte, with many broken hearts and amusing stories to be collected along the way

Having not dated in 30+ years, I was unsure how to even go about it. Friends urged me to try online dating, and so I reluctantly, cautiously did.

It was thought-provoking to enter my requirements on the dating website. I'm tall. Feeling a little shallow, I specified guys who I could look up to, 6'2" or taller. Assuming I had years of dating ahead of me, I wanted to at least a few times wear heels on a date.

I also pondered listing “must love honeybees” but feared that would really narrow my dating options. Many folks don't understand why people keep bees. When I'm lifting a deep box in 90 degree heat and 40,000 bees aren't happy about it, even I wonder why I keep honeybees.

February 2011 found me merrily dating tall men who initially matched my criteria, but whom I could tell, after just one date, I'd never bring home to meet the pets.

One day, as I was reviewing more potential dates, the site suggested someone who met most of my criteria. Marshall was only 6', but he was local and had also lost his spouse. I figured that made him convenient to meet and, for a change, I wouldn't have to hear stories about the guy's lousy ex-wife who divorced him just because he stopped playing video games only to golf.

Marshall and I met for coffee on a Saturday morning. I won't say it was love at first sight, but there was definitely something there...such that I cancelled my other two upcoming dates to explore what it was.

That “something there” grew because Marshall didn't play video games endlessly, and like me, loved long winter walks in the woods with the dog. Two weeks later, as we trudged through the February snow of my backyard, we wandered by



the hives. I stopped to study them, and was elated to see bees out flying.

After doing several cartwheels, I explained to Marshall why brown specks in the snow were cause for celebration. Marshall seemed to share my excitement, although he didn't cartwheel.

Unfortunately, many of those hives alive in February were no longer around by March, but Marshall still was. My feelings for him grew deeper when he helped lug deep boxes into the garage, and spent his day off tearing down dead-outs with me.

April arrived, and so did my annual shipment of package bees. Marshall calmly helped install them.

He was also eager to check for queen release and brood patterns, and enthusiastically built frames and painted boxes. It appeared that he really, really liked bees.

My first husband's parents were my parents-in-law for decades; their opinion is important to me. In telling them about Marshall, I shared that he even liked bees.

"Some guys," chuckled my father-in-law, "will do anything to get the girl."

I appreciated his opinion, but it made me a bit nervous. Part of me wondered if Marshall was really interested in me, or if I was just a bridge to his real true love—honeybees. I figured time would tell.

In time, Marshall took his share of rookie stings. He was itchy and puffy, but still enthused.

More time passed. We pulled honey, and he liked hanging out even when I was in a sweat-soaked bee suit. We did mite counts and powdered sugar blasts together. We assembled frames for hives busting with bees, and made nucs with queen cells. By August he could read a hive as quickly as I could. We had long discussions about the future of a few weak hives, and somewhere in all of that—discussions of our future as well.

By the end of September, after meeting the last of my brood, we decided to make it official. Time was critical in our relationship, because winter was soon approaching. Late fall is when you kick out any drones you don't want.

In October, Marshall removed the top cover of a hive we'd made from a queen cell, and found a couple of wedding rings atop the inner cover, covered in thriving honeybees that were pouring out.

I answered the stunned questioning look in his eyes. Yes, the hive was doing great, and yes, I was proposing. The queen bee is really in charge of everything!

A few weeks later, in the corner of my Dad's vineyard not far from my out-apiary, we put those rings on our fingers. The ceremony was attended only by our widowed octogenarian fathers, the pastor, the dog, and this large metal bird that shows up unexpectedly around my Dad's farm. Birds called overhead, brilliantly colored fall maples witnessed our vows, the dog chased squirrels, and the sun shone warmly.

It was like it was meant to be.

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