



WHAT GRANDPA LEARNED FROM HIS HONEYBEES

THE LITTLE BOOK TO BE SMART WITH YOUR
MONEY AND HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

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Disclaimer

This book is based on my experiences as a Servant Beekeeper, 30 years as a Clinical Psychologist, and some 40 years of value investing. The stocks and other investment examples presented in this book are for illustrative purposes only. While I have invested in them, make sure you review any changes to your investments with your investment advisor. I am not an investment advisor. Depending on when you read this book, the specific stock purchases may or may not be still in my portfolio.

DEDICATION

For Chloe, Ella, Poppy, and our future generations.

Bee Well and Prosper.

Grandma and Grandpa Svec

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INTRODUCTION

When I was a child, I grew up around honeybees. I watched my dad while he took care of his hives and caught swarms. Once a year, we took some honey from the hives. Tasting a spoon of fresh honey is very special. The experience never leaves you.

About 5 years ago, I started to work with bees. Mary and I decided to turn our 50-acre farm back over to nature and create a honeybee sanctuary. I spend a great deal of time watching honeybees to study them. We currently have a 24/7 webcam pointed to an entrance to a hive so I can watch them day or night.

The bees have taught me a great deal during the past 5 years. Things like, how important their habitat is to their survival and why I should stop trying to fix things that they can fix on their own.

They have taught me many lessons of how a successful hive is very much like someone who is smart with their money. How to save, invest, not spend foolishly, and have reserves for the future. Likely, you already know a lot of this but learning from the bees is how you will be able to do those things easily. This is because the Bees have systems and rules in place that make them act without really thinking about it. The bees show us how we can do this, too.

Honey is money to bees. A beehive has over 100 pounds of honey stored to take care of emergencies and thousands of bees during the winter. To survive they need to have enough food to live until the flowers bloom again in the spring. Honeybees are smart with their honey. They spend all their time, from April to November here in Canada, building up their honey reserves.

Many lessons from the bees in this book are new discoveries. Here is an example:

When a honeybee enters a flower to gather nectar for honey, it also pollinates it. It's not doing that on purpose. It rubs some pollen from other flowers on to this one by accident. The bees just happen to be doing something great for the flower while they are collecting nectar.

It's a win-win. The bees collect nectar from the flower and by bumping into it, the plants produce more seeds. The next year, because there are more seeds, there are more flowers for the bees. Pollinating the flowers helps increase the probability that the next generation of bees will survive. Being smart with your money means you invest in ways that are also accidentally good for the environment. Like the bees accidentally pollinating flowers, helping the environment is an accidental outcome of your investing. Like the bees, your unintentional help to the environment will also help you be smart with your money. You'll learn more about how to do this in a later chapter of this book.

What does it mean to be smart with your money?

Saving some of your earnings is the first step. Regardless of how much money you have coming in, you save every week. It could be just \$5 a week or up to 25% of your salary. Whatever it is, being smart with your money means you save a bit every week.

Investing some of your money is a necessary part of being smart with it. Investing wisely means you are sustainable. It means that the next generation will also be sustainable as well. You will learn how bees are value investors and what you can do to be one, too.

Sometimes, bees do dumb things that mean the end of them. You don't want to be foolish or dumb with your money. You understand the difference between things you buy that you need versus the things you just want. You never carry a credit card balance that charges you interest. If you use a card, you pay it off every month. You will learn some of the dumb things that bees do and how this often leads to their failure.

The final step to being smart with your money is to have reserves in case of trouble. It means that you have put enough away to protect yourself if you should lose your income. Reserves are designed to make you feel comfortable and safe regardless of what happens in the world.

The key way to know if you are smart with your money is to notice how often you stress about it. Stress is not good for anyone. Bees that are stressed are more vulnerable to disease and most don't survive. Being smart with your money means you have a system in place to take care of all those money problems that cause you stress. Like the healthy beehive, you thrive, are sustainable and can independently take care of your money needs.

Most people are not smart with their money. Some studies say that over half of us don't have any savings beyond this week's paycheck. Many of us are paying over 25% interest on credit card balances that we can't even start to pay off.

Each of the 10 chapters of this book will teach you a lesson from the bees you can start using right away to be smart with your money and help the environment. Each chapter has three sections.

The Bee Story explains a bee example that you can use to be smart with your money. Most of what I have to say comes from my observations on our farm.

The Smart Money section will give you practical solutions you can start doing today to be smart with your money.

Finally, the Investment Example will set you on your way to thinking differently about stocks, bonds, and other business investments. It's about putting the theory into practice if

you will. It's about bringing the true honeybee lesson into your investment portfolio.

So being smart with your money means that you save, invest, avoid foolish purchases, and have reserves in place. The 10 lessons from the bees will teach you through the Bee Stories, Practical Examples, and Investment Ideas how to do this.

I hope this book helps you as much as it has helped me while I was writing it.

I wrote this book for grandparents, parents, their children, and grandchildren. Children and teenagers would benefit greatly from learning some of the lessons from the bees. To do that, parents and grandparents may have to read it to them or take a couple of weeks and do a daily theme. Using real money would help, so that children can see the benefit of being smart with their money. It's never too late to start, so adults can also benefit from some of the honeybee lessons. What's most important is to start smart money strategies from the honeybees as soon as possible.

For myself, having a set of investment rules fits with my philosophy of value investing. What it also does is introduce the need to take care of the environment in all my investment practices. Just like the honeybee, the purpose is so that my investments will be more successful and sustainable. Helping the environment helps the investment be a better one. Just like the bee creating more flowers for

the next generation, positive environmental impacts of my investing will also have an impact on my next generation of grandchildren. That's why I'm writing this book in the first place. For Chloe, Ella and Poppy. Now, let's get started.

CHAPTER 1

Survival

The Bee Story

As I started to work with bees and find ways to help them, it became clear that everything they did was for survival. For honeybees, survival is everything.

In a beehive, the queen is the boss. She lays the eggs that keep the hive going. Without her, there can be no hive. The drones are the males of the hive and are a bit mysterious. We know that their main job is to fly to the congregation area to meet up with new queens and fertilize them. In the hive, they also regulate the temperature and humidity. They seem to be the heating, ventilation, and cooling machines. The worker bees are females, and they do pretty much everything. From keeping the queen fed, to feeding the babies, cleaning up, protecting the hive, and collecting food, they do it all. In the late fall, a different kind of worker bee, the winter bee, is born. It can stay alive for up to 6 months and has special features to survive the winter here in Canada. The summer bees only live for about 6 weeks.

In the spring, the hive builds up its stores of food whenever flowers are blooming. First, with blossoms from maple and willow trees, then dandelion, golden rod, and asters in the fall. Bees bring in many different types of pollen and nectar

because that helps them survive and fight disease. Stores of honey and pollen are needed in case something happens, such as possible drought, cold or inclement weather and eventually, the winter here in Canada.

The queen will increase the number of eggs she lays as the amount of food increases. The bees also tell her when some extra flowers are going to bloom 3 weeks from now, so she lays more eggs to produce a workforce to collect that extra food. The hive must get ready to store as much food as possible to survive.

In May or June of each year, there are so many bees in the hive that there is no room left. Swarming is a way for the hive to create a sister community and reduce the population by one half. So, 40,000 bees in a hive become 20,000. With one swarm, a hive becomes 2. But if there is only one queen in a hive, how do the bees create the second one that will stay behind in the old community?

To create new queens, the workers select a few healthy babies and start feeding them a different type of food. Royal jelly is the magic that turns a regular worker baby into a queen.

Sixteen days later, the new queen hatches. If the other queens hatch at the same time, there is a fight. Only the original queen and the one new queen that has survived the battles are allowed to move on. To start the swarm, the old queen very quickly gathers with about half the bees.

The workers fill up with honey for the trip to their new home. The swarm then leaves the hive and clusters on a branch of a tree some 500 feet or so from the main hive. The swarm looks a lot like a football made from bees. There are now two families of bees created from the one. This is a crucial step to honeybee survival.

Most swarms don't make it. There is a lot of risk once they leave the hive. Only one out of every five swarms will make it into the next spring.

So, bees work to be sustainable by their swarming behavior, creating enough new families with strong genetics to ensure that the community of honeybees in that area will survive.

Over the years, however, as beekeepers try to stop bees from swarming, we've encouraged some dumb bee behavior.

Sometimes, we try too hard to help our bees. Here's an example of a dumb behavior we see in our bees that leads to their downfall. It's like you having a large credit card balance that you can't pay off and deciding to go on a lavish trip to Europe. Pretty dumb and likely to lead to your money downfall as well.

As a Servant Beekeeper, I want our hives to swarm whenever they want to. Most bees that we have purchased, however, come from a tradition of not being

allowed to swarm. Beekeepers may try to stop that, by removing queen cells or even clipping the wings of a queen so she can't swarm and fly away with the bees. It is all well-intentioned and designed to help with the livestock type of beekeeping. If the bees don't produce enough honey, the farmer/beekeeper can't keep the bees and you won't be able to buy honey in the grocery store.

But by stopping the bees from swarming, I think that the bees have forgotten, in some instances, how to do it.

On our farm, I have watched swarms sit on the ground instead of in a high tree branch away from most danger. A hive that swarms and sits on the ground is easily eaten by predators and pests. When full of honey, the workers can't sting. They are helpless if attacked. Swarms that sit on the ground almost never make it.

I've also watched bees swarm in late April when it's very cold outside. In one case, a swarm sat out for 3 days while temperatures dropped to -5C. It rained on them, too. I don't think they made it.

This is just one example of how we, as humans, can encourage bees to do dumb things. The best answer I think is to try to only help them when that help won't mess them up. "Do no harm" if you will. Sometimes, as a Servant Beekeeper, it's hard to know when to step in and try to help or leave them alone. I guess that's a lifetime of learning we all have to do. Maybe, when in doubt, I should just leave

them alone. The more we do for them, the more likely we stop them from being smart.

It's a lot like how you handle money. The more you let other people make decisions for you or try to "help you", the more likely you are to fail and not be smart with your money.

The bees also work to ensure that each hive survives by collecting as much food as they can find. Guards watch over the entrance for pests and enemies. When watching my bees, I noticed that when conditions were ideal, the bees worked hard and sent out massive numbers of bees to collect food.

As farmers used to say, "make hay when the sun shines".

On rainy or cold spring days, few bees will fly to gather nectar or pollen. As a result, when the weather is perfect, they must work to take advantage of those opportunities. That is another part of their survival strategy.

Bees survive because everything they do is focused on that one goal. Survival.

For bees, pollen and honey are their money. They store it so that they can survive during difficult times and have enough to live through 6 months of cold weather and winter. Their survival strategies help them be ready.

Smart Money Lesson

We all need to be ready for an economic winter. You may get laid off, or your business suffers to the point where you can't pay yourself for months.

To be relaxed, you will likely need up to 6 months of living expenses in cash, or short-term notes that you can easily access. This is money to pay your bills, groceries, and gas. It's not money to go out to eat in a restaurant or buy clothes you don't need. It's for needs, not wants.

If you are like most Canadians, you may have a problem doing this. How can you save 6 months of living expense money when you have very little left after you get paid?

If you are healthy and young, there are many things you can do now to "Make Hay when the Sun Shines". One choice is to take on a second part-time job. Working an extra 10 hours per week would add some \$800/month, or \$9,600 per year to your savings account.

A second strategy is to take a small amount from your bank account where your salary or allowance is deposited and transfer it to a savings account. If you take out \$100 each pay period, and have 2 per month, over a year you would have saved \$2,400.

What you will see almost immediately is that you will adjust your spending to adjust to the amount that you have available.

Maybe the next month you try to transfer \$125. Your money stress is reduced as you have more money in reserves for your survival.

So, to match the bees and their storage of honey for survival, you need to have a savings of at least 6 months. Calculate the amount you would need each month and multiply by 6. This should be your savings goal for the next year or two. Now as you start saving, what can you do with the money to keep it safe but grow it a little faster?

Today as I write this, the Government of Canada will pay you some 3.5% interest on a short-term Treasury Bill. The 3.5% means on \$1,000 you will earn \$35/year in interest if you keep investing that money every 30 days. After 30 days, the government will pay you back \$1,002.91, the \$1,000 you initially lent them, plus the \$2.91 you made in interest. The money you loan to the Federal Government is guaranteed by them, so this is considered a safe way to park your money. After 30 days, if you need the money, it will be there for you. So, to do this strategy, keep one month of needed savings in a regular bank account, and the rest loan to your government 30 days at a time.

Being smart with your money means you have savings of 6 months or more to cover your bills. It also means that you place that money into a safe place such as 30-day Canadian Treasury Bills or a high interest savings account.

Investment Lesson

Like the bees, having access to 6 months of cash is part of your survival strategy. Having that cushion is an investment in your mental health. You will notice reduced stress as your reserves of cash build up. Invest in yourself and your family with less stress and the security of knowing you will survive. If you are still in school, having money in a bank account will improve your self esteem and confidence. Regardless of your age, having money in the bank to take care of yourself and survive is the best investment you can make. Only secured bank accounts or a Canadian Treasury Bill is what I recommend here.

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