

The Georgia National Fair Honors the 32 Year Legacy of Jesse & Hazel McCurdy



“I found out I don’t have a bad reaction to bee stings... I get stung 15-20 times a day. The most was 286 in one day”

Jesse McCurdy knows bees and is more than happy to share his knowledge and excitement with all fairgoers visiting the Georgia National Fair. Since the Georgia National Fair’s inception in 1990, Jesse, lovingly referred to as the “Bee Man”, has been selling sweet wildflower honey and educating visitors about the importance of bees.

“The executive director’s secretary bought honey from me at the time and asked if I would consider doing a honey show at the fair. I’ve been coming ever since” explained, Jesse.

The 32nd Annual Georgia National Fair is marking a milestone for Jesse’s honey show. This will be the final Fair Jesse and his wife of 64 years, Hazel, will be running the display. At almost 90 year old, even this Navy veteran can admit the boxes are getting a bit too heavy. The honey show will be passed onto Tim and Joedi Smith, as well as Tim’s brother, Brandon Smith.

“This may be my last Fair running the booth, but I’ll still be here moving honey jars and getting things just right” Jesse declared, matter-of-factly.

But Jesse’s story begins long before the Georgia National Fair. The year was 1942. While most of the world’s lens was focused on the battle raging throughout Europe and the Pacific, 10-year-old Jesse spent his days exploring the woods of Albany, Georgia. It was in those woods that his passion was born when young Jesse discovered a bee hive on his neighbor’s tree.

“I asked if I could cut it down and they said I was welcome to it. I got the honey and bees and they stayed with me for a long time after.”

While Jesse shared that his favorite thing about bees is the sweet honey they produced, he also revealed that his true love is sharing his expertise with others. This sentiment rings no truer than when Jesse and Hazel’s honey stand is displayed at the Georgia National Fair.

“The American people are really just now getting to realize the importance of bees to our food supply. We are losing bees at a rate of 35-40% a year, nationwide” explained Jesse. *“Bee keepers work to replace the ones that are dying. If it weren’t for beekeepers and their love for the industry, we would all go hungry.”*

According to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, bees perform about 80% percent of all pollination worldwide, but due to habitat loss, pollution, and other factors, populations are rapidly declining around the world.

Jesse encourages young people to learn more about bees and consider a career working in the industry. The world needs more beekeepers according to Jesse. And his number 1 piece of advice for working with bees (and life in general)? *“Learn to be patient, and stay calm. No flailing, slapping, and running.”*

The Georgia National Fair has been proud to partner with Jesse and Hazel McCurdy these last 32 years and is excited that his honey legacy will continue for years to come.

About Ambrosia Apiaries

Ambrosia Apiaries is owned and operated by Jesse and Hazel McCurdy and located in Perry, Georgia. Here you'll find real bee pollen granules from real beekeepers. Ambrosia Apiaries promise you'll only get “the real stuff”, 100% pure bee pollen collected by honeybees in the woods of Middle Georgia. Jesse's honey can be found across local stores in Perry, including Ace Hardware and the Perry Farmer's Market. He recommends it mixed with peanut butter and served on a salty Ritz cracker.

About the Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter

Located in Perry, Georgia, the Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter is one of the foremost event venues and livestock facilities in the nation. It is home to the Georgia National Fair, the Georgia National Rodeo, and hundreds of annual livestock events, trade shows, exhibitions, conventions, and meetings. As an authority of the state of Georgia, the GNFA's mission is to effectively promote Georgia's agriculture/agribusiness contributions and to encourage education and participation in the field.

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