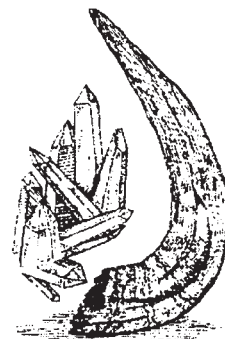


Applied BIODYNAMICS®



Spring, 2001

Newsletter of the Josephine Porter Institute • Woolwine, Virginia

Issue No. 32

Nick Franceschelli

An Interview with Ruth Zinniker – Part 1

It is getting harder and harder to draw a straight line between the actual event of Rudolf Steiner's agricultural lectures and our twenty-first century. Ruth Zinniker is one of those who connects us to that now distant point in time, and she is also one who carries the impulse from the Old World to the New World. Ruth Zinniker (née Voegele) was born in the eastern part of Germany in 1932 and she spent her childhood and youth among the biodynamic pioneering giants of Europe. Her active adult years, and hardly anyone is more active than Ruth, have been spent planting the biodynamic impulse into the soil of the Zinniker Farm in East Troy, Wisconsin, as well as into the hearts and minds of literally hundreds of people whom she has touched in the past four decades. Certainly that is true for this interviewer, who got his adult start in farming and biodynamics at Zinniker's. Largely due to Ruth's ceaseless striving, the Zinniker Farm is now the nucleus of one of the greatest concentrations of biological and biodynamic farm activity in the U.S. today.

Nick Franceschelli: *What I want to ask you to do Ruth, is to tell us some of your biography. A lot of people don't have a connection to the event of the Agriculture Course. Are you willing to tell us how you grew up in biodynamics?*

Ruth Zinniker: How I grew up in biodynamics? What would you like me to cover? That my father was one of the young farmers who asked Steiner for advice? [We are talking about Immanuel Voegele.]

NF: *Yes. If you could tell a little bit about him, and then how you grew up in that atmosphere of biodynamics. How old was your father when he came to Steiner?*

Continued on page 6



Ruth Zinniker on her farm

Editorial Notes

At last, spring is here and this issue of *Applied Biodynamics* is now caught up with real time, actually being printed in the spring of 2001! Thanks to all for your patience in this extended process of putting the newsletter back on schedule. Many people talk the talk, but few walk the talk. We know someone who embodies the expression, “walk the talk”. Read about Ruth Zinniker, who has practiced biodynamics all her life. For those who are new to biodynamics, Tony Davis shares his thoughts on his first preparations-making seminar here at JPI.

To remind us of the importance of the food we consume, how it affects us spiritually as well as physiologically, Jim and Jenni Muir offer an in-depth review of Dr. Eugene Kolisko’s *Nutrition*, Numbers 1 and 2.

Also in this issue, the dandelion, a preparation plant that too many people love to hate, is redeemed to its rightful and positive place. Chris Korrow’s essay provides the extra fuel needed for anyone who has found themselves debating with their neighbors as to why dandelions should be spared from lawn annihilation.

For your reference, we have included in this newsletter a back issue list of *Applied Biodynamics*.

— Patricia Smith

JPI Prep Making Seminar

Please mark your calendars for JPI’s upcoming Preparation Making Seminar. Our Seminar – Part 1 will be held from Thursday, June 21 at 8:00 PM through Sunday, June 24 at 6:00 PM. Part 1 will focus on making BD #501, 502, 504, and 507, with additional time examining preparations to be dug up which could include BD #500, 502, 503, 504, 505, and 506. The opportunity to actually make the biodynamic preparations rather than to merely watch a demonstration of someone else making a preparation is available at JPI to a greater degree than anywhere else in the country. Cost of Part 1 will be \$375.00 which includes midday and evening meals (with a breakfast bar available) for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the seminar. We will be glad to work out a payment plan with anyone who needs to arrange for such. We can also offer a limited number of work scholarships for those who need financial help to attend. Anyone who has previously attended a JPI preparations making seminar is also eligible to receive a \$100.00 discount off the tuition fee.

Attendance at JPI seminars is limited, so make your reservation early. Reservations may be secured by a non-refundable deposit of \$75.00 (A deposit is required to cover costs of advanced meal preparation).



Mission

The Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI), was founded to produce quality biodynamic agricultural preparations based on the spiritual-scientific research of Rudolf Steiner.

It serves as a living memorial to Josephine Porter, a pioneer for this work in America.

The mission of JPI also includes education and research in biodynamic agriculture. JPI undertakes these tasks so that the earth may be healed.

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The Editor, *Applied Biodynamics*

P.O. Box 133

Woolwine, VA 24185, U.S.A.

Phone: (540)930-2463

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Comments on the Preparations Seminar – Part 1, June 2000

The seminar in June 2000 was full of good weather, food, and hard work with a schedule that covered a lot of ground. I was very pleased with the amount of participation afforded us, from harvesting nettles and digging up yarrow preparations, to installing a batch of barrel compost into the ground. The new building is fully functional and is a tribute to the hard work being done at JPI. I wish to thank everyone there for making it a pleasant and worthwhile experience.

But that is pretty much all on the physical plane: the showing up and listening to what was being said and done. What gradually dawned upon me was the import of what was being done there. The goal was to show us how to make the preparations, adding our energies to the process. Becoming active in that was for me the most interesting part. All the activities pertaining to the preparations take on a lofty air – with us giving as full a presence of mind as possible. I was very conscious of the fact of acting as a counterbalance to materialistic ideas and tendencies. After three days, it seemed very natural, orderly, and beneficial to be engaged in the work. Later, I wrote down these thoughts which are relevant here.

How should we implement spirituality so that it bears upon our everyday life? By the thoughts, actions, and deeds that proceed from us. From clear insight right action can be taken, everything is done in the present moment – we must bring all our forces and faculties to bear on it like there were no other, constantly mindful of the right path. Look always for the divine in Nature.

Encouragement for living can come in a number of different ways and I found this spirit active at JPI waiting to be discovered, holding the gate open for me, revealing possibilities which have come down to the physical, to the tangible, and which can be used for the betterment of man and the earth.

Hugh Courtney takes very special care in maintaining and improving where possible the quality of the preparations and has learned that some corners are better left uncut. This means taking very seriously the directions given by Rudolf Steiner, harvesting only those portions needed, avoiding contamination, leaving the preparations in the ground for the prescribed amount of time and coming as close as possible to utilizing the etheric life forces. The edict of Paracelsus, “*experimentum et ratiocinium*” (experiment and reason), is a good way of instilling a creative liveliness into the work. A lot of questions

were asked, the variety of which showed the intricacies and almost endless amounts of different conditions that could influence the overall effectiveness. That many questions were answered showed a depth of understanding from the collective experiences of the staff.

Did I mention the humor? Without this air of jollity it would not have been the same. Witty discourses and jokes about practical observations kept us smiling, and not all at our own expense. We got to know everyone pretty well and this just served to enhance the spiritual aspects and potentials for further growth and development in the spreading of the preparations. Thus, this serves a vital and purposeful role where the more people are involved, the better our chances are of saving and healing this beautiful world of ours.

Last year Tony Davis moved back to his native country of England, and is studying a two-year organic horticulture course at Pershore College, with a year's placement at the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) show garden at Yalding, Kent.

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

BD #500 – Horn Manure

BD #501 – Horn Silica

BD #502 – Yarrow

BD #503 – Chamomile

BD #504 – Stinging Nettle

BD #505 – Oak Bark

BD #506 – Dandelion

BD #507 – Valerian

} Compost
Preparations

BD #508 – Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

Book Review

Nutrition by Dr. Eugene Kolisko, M.D.

Number 1 (Lectures 1-3) 49 pages

Number 2 (Lectures 4-5) 40 pages

Based on lectures given in Stuttgart in 1932, these two small booklets are packed with gems of wisdom applicable today. While his writing style is difficult reading, and the concepts are repeated many times throughout the lectures, Dr. Kolisko's ideas focus on the living and spiritual side of nutrition.

The first three lectures contained in the first booklet were published soon after Dr. Kolisko's death, while the last two lectures in the second book were later translated from Mrs. Kolisko's shorthand notes. If Dr. Kolisko were alive today, his message would be considered ahead of his time as present conventional nutrition fails to address the spiritual life-giving qualities of food, and its effects on the living body. Ultimately, the body must transform food into a form that can exist in human blood. Consuming the right food enables man to build a healthy body, and provides the right internal environment for soul and spiritual activities to live and develop. The present ideas about the nutritive processes only deal with the chemical side of the vitamins, and the energy from calories.

Dr. Kolisko was quick to point out that taste, smell, and sight are the most important (conscious) part of the nutrition process, because this gives the body the ability to create and secrete saliva, gastric, and intestinal juices vital to the complete transformation of food. He added, it is all connected with interest, appetite, tasting the food, and the way the food is prepared.

The author divided food into groups, and related each group to body utilization. One example he gave was fruits having a special regulating effect on human metabolism. A second example he gave was leaf, with its effect on the body's respiratory system, the hemoglobin contained in the red corpuscles, and the regulation of the iron process in it. He believed leaf substances share in the creation of blood.

He felt it is not possible to make rules that say everybody ought to be a vegetarian. He believed the process of nutrition is a very individual sphere; the whole human organism has to be taken into consideration.

Everywhere inside living organisms, ferments exist. The chemical substances form the material body, and the ferments represent the most varied functions of life. Kolisko stated it was never possible to make a ferment in

the way that we can make other synthetic substances.

Back then, vitamins could not be made synthetically (although they are being made synthetically today). As Dr. Kolisko pointed out, manufactured vitamins have different effects on man than vitamins derived from fresh food. Science had a tendency to regard vitamins as nothing but chemical substances, and thus brought about the adding of synthetic vitamins to all foods, treating these foods as "substances". In his day, nutrition was artificial, and separated from life, and it is more so today.

Vitamins are the life in the plant realm. We can see the material world, but cannot see the second world, which makes itself manifest through its effects. The forces that stimulate life stream down from the sun. The study of the various ethers beyond that of material substances, lead us to discover much about the formative forces hidden within nature, and Kolisko stated it is possible to connect the four fundamental vitamins (A, B, C, D) with the various ethers in plants.

It becomes clear after reading these booklets that the process of human nutrition cannot be understood without a clear knowledge of the connections between the different kingdoms of nature and the human being.

Dr. Kolisko stated the scientific study of nutrition is scientific, but not nourishing. He believed the whole outlook on nutrition is related to our conception of the human being (machine or living organism), and of nature. He went on to discuss our concept of nutrition being the same, yet he felt nutrition is a study full of spirituality.

These booklets provided a look at the flawed way man tends to view himself, nature, his food, and the cultivation of plants. As an example, for a long time man has considered the material content of his food of the most importance. When thinking of the cultivation of plants, man is chiefly concerned with providing substances in the form of fertilizers as plant nutrients, even if these are already available within the soil. As Dr. Kolisko stated, it is not the substances within the plant, but rather its life processes that are vital to our health.

Farmers in his day seemed only concerned about increasing yield, yet no real scientific research was done to test whether the nutritional values are affected. When plants were made to ripen early, farmers viewed this as an economic advantage, however the plant was no longer connected with yearly rhythms, with the seasons, or with the rhythmic effect of the sun's influence. He believed

subtle differences such as these passed unobserved.

Most interesting was research showing plants produced using electric light, and the resulting food products having a completely different nutritive value. Dr. Kolisko felt it is cosmic forces that endow an organism with vitality, with life. He stated that electricity is hostile to life. Thus he felt that due consideration must be given to the cultivation of plants, which need not only earthly forces and substances, but also that which streams in from the outer universe.

A great deal of discussion was given to silica. He stated silica first becomes active when it can no longer be detected as substance, and thus is widely used in homeopathy. In plants, silica acts as a kind of collector for all the forces that appear here, from out of the cosmos. Silica draws in the forces that are connected with light. He noted that Steiner said the effect of silica is identical with the effect of life. Dr. Kolisko discussed the fact that plants grown in darkness in sand served to prove this. When there is enough silica present, plants can draw in forces from the cosmos.

If the vitality of the plant remains vigorous, then the

plant will not be attacked by pests. Dr. Kolisko believed our agriculture should be a working exchange between the universe and the earth, between plant and animal, and between these and man, which he said is biodynamic agriculture. We cannot just view nature from the materialistic side only – we cannot get a link into the living processes. Nutrition is not confined to the material, but to the whole universe.

The information packed into the mere eighty-nine pages of these two small booklets, is not only valuable in understanding nutrition, it is valuable in understanding our health, our agricultural needs, and much more.

Jim and Jenni Muir are biodynamic gardeners, growing culinary/medicinal herbs, fruits, and vegetables in the southwest desert of Arizona. For many years the Muir's taught organic/biodynamic gardening, and published *Southwest Organic Gardener* newsletter.

Eugene Kolisko's *Nutrition* booklets Nos. 1 and 2 are available through JPI for \$8.00 each plus postage and handling.

Chris Korrow

Society Needs to Reconsider the Dandelion

Millions of dollars are spent every year to eradicate essentially one weed. The lowly dandelion. Let's think this over for a minute. There are an ever increasing number of cases of hypoglycemia and diabetes in this country. Dandelion is one of the best herbs to use for healing these afflictions. Its leaves are incredibly nutritious, the root is not only a powerful medicine, but roasted it is also an excellent coffee substitute. Its flowers can be made into a delicious wine and they are also a favorite flower of bees. It builds soil and I have yet to meet a child who hasn't found joy in blowing its seeds into the wind. It is what I consider a workhorse of the plant kingdom. In addition to all of this, it was recommended by Rudolf Steiner for use as one of the six biodynamic compost preparations. What more could we ask of a plant.

And what is it that we get for our efforts to eradicate it? An uninterrupted lawn, labor, and a toxic environment. And yet, this is considered to be a sign of our intelligence.

Chris Korrow is a biodynamic farmer in Burkesville, Kentucky. He can be contacted at <www.dogwoodspringfarm.com>. Our thanks to Erin Coffin for the use of her dandelion drawing.



Continued from page 1

RZ: Yes, twenty-seven. He was born 1897. That was in 1924. Because the chemical fertilizers came on the market at that time. They were educated farmers and could already see some degeneration in plant life and animal reproduction. Steiner wasn't going to be able to give the course, I guess because of health reasons. So the farmers sent the nephew of Graf [Count] Keyserlingk [Alexander von Keyserlingk] to Dornach and told him not to return unless Steiner agreed to come. Then Steiner okayed it. And so the Agriculture Course took place! And then Hartmut von Jeetze's mother had a farm in Schlesien [Silesia] and they made it available for the biodynamic work and research. They asked my father whether he would run it, so he moved to that farm, I think in '25. I'm not sure, Hartmut von Jeetze probably knows more. My



At the time of Ruth's childhood, Silesia was a part of Germany. Today, most of Silesia is divided between Poland and the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia).

mother was studying eurythmy in Dornach and wanted to work with Karl Koenig together in curative education. She only had the regular eurythmy education, not the curative. When Marie Steiner found out that my mother lacked the curative eurythmy training and was planning to work with Karl Koenig, she asked my mother to come to her for training. But my mother was pretty firm. When she wanted to do something, she would go ahead and do it. So Marie Steiner said, "Show me something." When my mother had performed something for her, she gave her permission to go ahead. Then she went with Karl Koenig to Schlesien to look for a place to do curative education, but they couldn't find the right place. So von Jeetze's gave up their castle for the curative home, and there my father met my mother. They got married and we kids came along, and we were on that farm until we had to flee [the advancing Soviet army] in January '45. It was biodynamic, and my father also had a research garden. He regenerated potatoes. It was a fairly big farm.

NF: *How big was it?*

RZ: Nine hundred morgen [One morgen is about two-thirds of an acre] under the plow. Twelve teams of horses, twelve teams of oxen, and sixty cows. More than half the people of the nearby village were working on the farm. It was a big estate.

NF: *So when you were growing up on a biodynamic farm, did you just learn about it there, or did you learn about it at school or somewhere else?*

RZ: On the farm, and then I did an apprenticeship. When we had to flee, we came onto Martin Schmidt's farm in Thüringen [Thuringia]. They had a kind of community farm of young people.

NF: *How old were you then?*

RZ: I just turned 12 in October of '44. We had to flee in January. Then we had to flee again, because the Americans gave Thüringen to Russia once they had got all the scientists out.

NF: *And so then you moved to Talhof?*

RZ: Not for a year and a half. When the Americans took over, there was an army officer who knew Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, and he helped us find another place, because we took all the cows, horses, and sheep. He helped us find a place up north. The following November my father went to Stuttgart to reopen the Forschungsring [Experimental Circle]. He was looking for a farm where there was a Waldorf school close by. That was the Talhof. That was January 1948. My father was actually there earlier, so for a time our family was separated into three parts. My older sister and my younger brother and I were in Loheland. That's a gymnastics school where the Bothmer Gymnastics came out

of it. My little sister and mother lived near a military range, where all the villagers had to move out, and then the houses were gutted. It was not too far from Loheland. We lived there for one and a half years. I missed school for two years. We had private lessons while we were attending the gymnastic school. Then we moved to Heidenheim and I started eighth grade. We built the school up with Martina [Mann's] sister till the twelfth grade, until '52.

NF: *And Heidenheim, that's near the Talhof, right?*

RZ: Yes. That belongs to Voith's.

NF: *When your dad took that farm over, was it then his farm, or part of the Voith estate?*

RZ: That was the Voith factory farm. They had an estate near the Bodensee in Ueberlingen.

NF: *And Talhof was biodynamic right from the start?*

RZ: I don't know. During the war another farmer was on it. It was once run biodynamically. What it was when my father converted it, I don't quite know. Then, in '52 the farm at Schloss Hamborn was available, so the people there asked my father to take it on. The Talhof was maybe too small for him, because he was an invalid from the First World War [Immanuel Voegelé's dream was to work with children in a school environment]. So we moved up there. Before the war it was a curative home, and after the war it became a Waldorf boarding school. And, it's a big community. There I did my first apprentice year.

NF: *On the farm with your dad?*

RZ: No, I had to do the housework side of it, because girls didn't do the outside work, even though I did it anyway, part time. Then I went to farm school. That was one of the best since I don't know when. Martina Mann's mother went there and Rosemarie [Bergmann] went there. Only the wealthy people and their employees went there. We learned every practical and theoretical thing there. How to make sausages. How to butcher chickens. You name it.

NF: *Not necessarily anything about biodynamics?*

RZ: No.

NF: *That you learned at home?*

RZ: At home and then in '54 and '55 I went to Pruke-manns [in Dortmund] in my last year of apprenticeship. They were just converting to biodynamics and I helped there.

NF: *Was it clear to you by then that you would be a biodynamic farmer?*

RZ: Always. From when I was little on. I wanted to do the outside work.

NF: *How did you get to the United States all of sudden?*

RZ: When I had my degree in my pocket, I decided that I didn't want to go on for a master's degree, because I would have had to work in a hotel or something like that

for half a year. I went to England for half a year to a kind of biodynamic boarding school [at Kings Langley]. It wasn't a Waldorf school. Then I had the opportunity to work in the German Alps in a hotel where only the movie stars and artists go. Martina and Christopher Mann spent their honeymoon there. They had a biodynamic farm attached, but I had to serve the guests. When we hotel workers had a day off, we were treated like guests. We really were. There was dancing . . . then my uncle invited me to come to America. I waited till the last minute to come to this country. I didn't really want to go.

NF: *Why did you have to go?*

RZ: My uncle invited me because I was his godchild. He said just to come for half a year, but to bring my immigration visa along so that I could work here. I had job offers in Sweden and in Switzerland at the Lago Maggiore. So I arrived in New York on a Friday. Here were the Fetzer's [Ernst and Marie]! I started working at the Fetzer farm through an ad that my aunt found in the German papers. I knew this was my place. But you don't have to put all that down . . .

NF: *It's human interest.*

RZ: So I met Dick [Zinniker] at the biodynamic conference at Golden Acres [Walter Stuber's farm in Newtown, PA] in '58. Then I went out to California, just to explore the country. A friend of my aunt was a professor at Berkeley, so he found me a job with some millionaires. I wanted to be in the country with horses. That was a cattle and walnut ranch near San Jose. I stopped here at the Zinniker Farm in Wisconsin. Ernst Fetzer had told, "Ruth, I have a nice boyfriend for you, but don't show him the cold shoulder. He can't take it!" So on my way out, I invited myself to come and stopped in Chicago. That was in November. I came here for three days and hated everything. It was gray . . . I don't know whether you know that on the second day I was here, I sat outside. There was an inner voice that said, "This is my place." I didn't want to stay here. I wanted to work with my father. But it never left me. In the two and quarter years I was here I saw Dick only a week at a time four times. So four weeks. Then my father passed away also, and I went back [to Germany] for 11 months to help my mother build a house, and I went a second time also to Fetzer's. The other half of the second year, in winter, I was near Boston on a millionaire's gentleman farm as a servant. In 1961, Dick had to come over to marry me. I showed him Dornach, I showed him many different places and we visited his family in Switzerland.

NF: *So, biographically speaking you are now farming biodynamically in the United States. How did you experience that different from Germany?*



The Zinniker Farm in East Troy, Wisconsin.

RZ: They didn't know much here. Well, you know Pfeiffer was here. He only showed people what to do with the [compost] starter. I did some spraying at Fetzer's. Fetzer's knew a little more because they were also German, but they didn't really do it the way I grew up with it. I introduced the stirring here at the Zinniker Farm. That was hand stirring. Since then, I always did it and the compost preparations.

NF: *How has your farm changed since you came forty years ago? Do you do a lot more with biodynamics or about the same?*

RZ: Well Max [Ruth's father-in-law] did only the Pfeiffer [Compost] Starter. They got the siftings from Margrit Selke. Because they were always kind of poor, they didn't have to pay much. I introduced the spraying of the preps. More so after Dick and I took on the management of the farm in 1970.

NF: *I remember when I came out there in '75 we were already spraying 500 on a lot of the plowed ground.*

RZ: Max and I did that, too, before that time, but when my kids came along I couldn't do that much. I just did it in the garden.

NF: *Did you learn preparations-making from your dad?*

RZ: We had a compost master there on the farm in Silesia, Kurt Willmann. He is also well known. He was stirring the preparations with the eighth graders. They were public school children, and he was telling them stories.

Everybody had a wooden bucket. There were probably eighteen or twenty of them.

NF: *Wow!*

RZ: Maybe sixteen kids. You know, to a child it all looks bigger than it really is. Then the men would spray with a knapsack sprayer. There was no tractor there until they took the horses away for the war. The first tractor we got, they called Bulldog.

NF: *That was more using the preps. Did you learn to make them from your dad or Willmann?*

RZ: I was always there whatever they were doing. Observing and helping along.

NF: *I remember that you first started making all the preparations yourself around the time I came out there. Not just for the garden compost but for the farm's manure piles.*

RZ: I always made them for the garden. Then when you came here you wanted to participate. Then it got bigger. The Chicago Waldorf School parents like Frances Vig and Margaret McQuire also wanted to participate, and then later we made the preparations for Nokomis Farm [East Troy, Wisconsin]. In '73, the first Waldorf school class came. In '74 came a Waldorf school, and I think in '75 the first Waldorf Institute students came from Detroit with Hans Gebert. The following year he sent a group, too. Trauger Groh's wife Alice also came at that time.

NF: *As far as I know, you were the first to introduce preparations making as a festival.*



A third grade class shows their harvest of dandelions.

RZ: That came more so when you started here on Nokomis Farm. You know we did it together. When you came here in the '70s, were there more people than just you?

NF: *Not many. I can't remember anybody else coming. When I came back in the '80s to work at Nokomis Farm, you used to invite people from the Christian community and the Chicago Waldorf School to come and help and they would bring their friends, and it got pretty big.*

RZ: With the kids, it was probably fifty or sixty people. Chicago people used it also as an outing. The Waldorf school people felt it was *their* farm too. Kids love to come here. In '84 or '85, Alan York came from Missouri with three or four people to make the preparations. Later we started doing workshops together with prep making. Since we started the garden workshops, the people wanted to participate in digging out the preps in spring. Then it shifted. The Waldorf people didn't come so much anymore, because we didn't start until afternoon, so that the CSA gardeners who went to the market could come. We always had a big crowd. It got bigger and bigger. Twice we had a barn dance after we made the preparations. Michael Fields [Agricultural Institute] arranged it. Anyway, last year we had seventy-five people come from all walks of life. Drs. Rentea [Russ and Andrea] always come.

NF: *That must go very fast.*

RZ: Yes. We get it done. Well, this year Walter Moora had

500 horns to be filled. We started around 2:30 [PM].

NF: *You start with compost preparations and do the horns after?*

RZ: We do everything altogether. We have a responsible person supervising each preparation. Some people come on a regular basis, so you don't have to supervise them. Usually someone is by the dandelions in order that the balls [pillows] are made nicely firm. And they change. The people move around.

NF: *So you keep quality there by making sure that an experienced person is watching over each preparation. You feel that the quality keeps up with so many people helping?*

RZ: You know what I feel? The spiritual world does the rest when you come together to do something. Last year, when Manfred Klett was supposed to come here after California, and then he couldn't come, I wrote him then about what we did without him. His wife wrote back that it was a real Michael Festival what we are doing here. People come and we have a potluck supper afterwards. Then we have a bonfire and people bring guitars – Waldorf school parents, whoever. There were maybe five guitars. An intern had a saxophone. This year we had three violins, one flute, and the guitars. This year it lasted till eleven o'clock. Everybody comes. I'm not so precise like Hugh Courtney is. I think the effort counts. Little children are there. They are putting in dandelions and the grownups help them. It's all ages and all walks of life. The people

don't mind it. Each year it gets more. Also, in our CRAFT [Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training] brochure we let people know. We have a CRAFT program on that day. That brings more younger people in.

NF: *It all happens at your farm?*

RZ: Yes. Also, in the spring we have a dandelion picking party! That also came from the workshops. When we did workshops we called them organic/biodynamic. We just mentioned biodynamics a little. And then people, when they filled out their evaluation papers, they wrote that they wanted to know more about biodynamics. We didn't push it down their throats. They asked for it, and then they wanted to participate when we take the preparations out in the spring. Hugh Courtney, as you know, is always short on dandelions, so we started a dandelion picking party at 8:30 AM. We had up to eighty people, with kids and everything. We shipped Hugh about eighteen pounds of dried dandelions. I pick six more pounds for here. This year we had interns and I am the slave driver. Each one has to pick two ice cream buckets full. And, kindergarten kids pick too. You know, it's beautiful! You encourage them. I should send you a picture. It's just gorgeous. We have nine eight-foot long screens from our porch. They were filled and others, too. It was just golden yellow. It's so much fun. If I wouldn't do it, nobody would do it. It depends on the individual. The social part is also nice then.

NF: *And that day is also when you dig out the preparations?*

RZ: It depends on nature. We usually aim for the second Saturday in May. Once there were no dandelions blooming yet. The last two years we had to push it towards April. The 500 was not really cured, but I took it out anyway. When you take the preparations out and they feel not quite cured, but they cure by themselves then. The last couple years we had warm winters, so the stuff in the big horns had not quite cured.

NF: *Do you find that they cure better in a cold winter?*

RZ: No. Some horns are too big. The top is cured. The lower part is still in-between. So we break off the part that looks okay and put the rest in another horn and we put it back in the ground. Here I put a blanket of leaves over the place where I bury the horns in the winter.

NF: *It's amazing to think how from the time I first came there, and even more when you first came out there in 1961, it was a farm in the middle of nowhere. And now, even the cities are encroaching, there is so much activity there. If you think of all the other farmers, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Uriel Pharmacy, Stella Gardens, it's just amazing how much is happening now. It really all started with a small, modest beginning.*

RZ: At Michael Fields we are working with the University

[of Wisconsin at Madison]. We have a professor there who is interested in anthroposophy. Steve Stevenson. It's just great. We embrace everybody.

NF: *I remember that when I first came to work at the Nokomis Farm, you recommended burying the Nokomis preps in Zinniker farm soil for a while just till we got our soil improved. Our soil wasn't in good shape, but we thought it would be better if we bury our preps on our own farm, so we did it. Surprisingly, they didn't turn out at all, whereas the same preparations made by the same people on your farm transformed.*

RZ: I asked everybody to look. The difference was like day and night. Your chamomile was big and smelled like ammonia, and the dandelion like rotten silage. I remember that I had told you and Steffen Schneider that you have to be really careful when you dig out the chamomile, because it will be so decomposed already, you know, transformed. Then you asked me, "Ruth, can you look at them? They look kind of different." I sent samples to Will Brinton without telling him what happened. In the meantime, Herbert Koepf came and I asked him about it. John Bashaw said that we needed a soil sample. I knew that there still were some chemical residues in that soil from the previous owner managing it conventionally. Herbert said that there were residues. In the second year Clifford Kurtz was here when you dug out your preparations, and your chamomile sausages smelled better, but they were still kind of big.

NF: *What do you mean by "big"?*

RZ: They were bigger than mine when they came out. They exploded. I don't know what it was . . . thicker! The chamomile still looked like chamomile.

NF: *Untransformed?*

RZ: A little transformed, but it didn't stink anymore. That I remember.

NF: *It really woke me up. It was one of the most important lessons I learned from you. It really does make a difference not only how you make them, but where you place them. You have been making preparations for at least forty years now since you introduced the actual preparations on your farm. Can you really feel the difference?*

RZ: Well, people who come to the farm feel something. When you're living here you take it as normal, maybe you see a difference, but the others express it.

NF: *Because they see the contrast?*

RZ: Yes. Our renters, a couple who now have been six years in that little cottage across from the farm, they are very spiritually oriented, and they said, "Ruth, people who come to our place see that there is something very special." They said, "You are protected here by the spiritual world."

NF: *Do they know that you're using the biodynamics?*

RZ: Oh yes. They are open. They know that we do something.

NF: *Ruth, you see a lot of young people through the CRAFT and through interns. What do you tell them if they say they want to begin with or convert to biodynamics? Especially if they are inexperienced and idealistic?*

RZ: First you have to be a good farmer or a good gardener. Practical methods, crop rotations, and so on. Biodynamics is a very individual thing. It has to come from

within. You have to want to heal the earth at the same time. I tell them to go out and be the researcher and observer. I tell them, "Don't believe anything I'm telling you. Just go and find out for yourself, and you will recognize it, and then you will believe it."

Nick Franceschelli was born and raised in New York City. After high school he worked on biodynamic dairy farms and at the Josephine Porter Institute. He now works for a farm and nature program at the Hawthorne Valley Farm in New York State.

Patricia Smith

Interview with Ruth Zinniker – Part 2

Ruth Zinniker lives on a 165 acre farm, 120 acres of which are tillable. The Zinniker family raises practically everything the farm needs. The principal crops are alfalfa and oats, also ear corn and corn for silage, a little rye and wheat for cereal and bread use, and clover and cover crops. On this biodynamic farm are twenty-nine Holstein cows, a bull and fifteen to twenty young stock and chickens. All the feed needed for the livestock is grown on the farm. The house and field garden combined is about one-third of an acre. In these gardens grow all the vegetables needed for the year and also valerian, chamomile, stinging nettle, and yarrow (which grows in the pasture), the plants used to make the biodynamic preparations. Ruth bakes her own bread, does canning, makes jam, sauerkraut, cottage cheese, and uses the meat, milk and honey from the farm. The Zinniker's raise ninety-five percent of their own food and some to give away as well. Other than the use of composts, biodynamic preparations, plant teas from nettle and comfrey, no other soil or plant amendments are used on the gardens and fields.

Patricia Smith: *How do you use the biodynamic compost preparations?*

Ruth Zinniker: We make all the biodynamic preparations. With the compost preparations, every second day, when my son Markus takes out about two tons of manure from the barn and adds this to the windrow, he puts in two sets of preps, 502 to 506. Two to three weeks before the compost is ready to be spread on the fields, the 507 is sprayed on the entire windrow. The 507 is sprayed then because the time it would take for stirring and spraying the 507 every two days would not be practical, taking too much time. The windrow is added to every two days from November to April. And then we have the barrel compost

too, which we use if it's too bitter cold or on Sundays, we sprinkle that in the barn on the manure before the barn cleaner [a machine that moves manure] is turned on.

PS: *How are the other biodynamic preparations used?*

RZ: The 500 is stirred by hand and sprayed over the fields before planting. The 501 is sprayed when the ground is covered and the oats are eight inches high or so and it is sprayed in the morning. The 507 we use also in the garden for frost danger, you would stir the valerian as you would for the compost pile, and then you spray in the evening. When the strawberries were blooming and there was danger of frost, they were sprayed with the 507 and were protected.

This works down to 26 degrees or less. The 508, I haven't used too much of it. Last year, after a lot of rain, there were snails all over the strawberries. The equisetum [508] tea was sprayed in the morning along with the 501(5x). After the spraying of 508 and 501(5x) together, all the snails were gone by the afternoon. The 508 also brings the silica so this helps when too wet and the sunlight is lacking and is used against fungus.

PS: *What do you do with the stinging nettle plant?*

RZ: Cut stinging nettle, put it in a barrel or a five gallon bucket in the shade, fill it with water and cover it. It has to be in the shade, the north side of a hedge or building. If it is less than twenty-four hours old, you can use it like an insecticide. When it is older, you use it like a 500 spray. It acts like a little fertilizer, strengthens the plant, especially in a drought. The nettle balances the moon forces when the sun forces are too strong. Spray the nettle tea in the evening over the plants. The dilution is one part nettle tea to nine parts water. Really, you have to do it how you feel is the right amount.

PS: *Do you have any special plants that you have found that work well?*

RZ: We do with comfrey, fermenting it first and we put it in the liquid manure. [The comfrey] has a lot of potassium. The liquid manure, the urine water from the cow manure is drained out and the five preps [502 to 506] each are put into a cloth ball and it hangs in the tank of the liquid manure. On the day it is to be applied, we stir 507 and add this to the tank of liquid manure and it is sprayed on the fields on a cloudy day.

PS: *Do you have any insect or weed problems?*

RZ: If it is dry, you have more insects, they don't do much damage here. The potato beetles can be picked and you can also spray them with the stinging nettle liquid or, you can ferment the larvae and bugs in water and spray the potatoes.

As for the weeds, the thistle we cut below the ground in the pasture. All it needs is labor. In the garden we control it with hand cultivation. Shallow hoeing is like mulching, especially after a rain. Of course it depends on the soil.

PS: *How do you deal with dry conditions?*

RZ: All I use is the stinging nettle liquid. We once did the sequential spray, I did everything Hugh Courtney suggested, but we were not lucky to get the rain. The Great Lakes weather can get twisted around and take a different direction. In the 1960s, there was a drought. I would apply a nettle tea with a broom every second day in the evening in the garden. The evening was the only time I could to get out to do this because my children were small at the time. At first, the garden looked like a greenhouse, then we had seven inches of rain. In August, the carrots and cabbages rotted away. My in-laws did little for the drought and their carrots and cabbages were fine. I should have sprayed the 501 to balance it out but I was not able to do it. Now I'm more careful!

PS: *What do you do during a wet season and when there are fungus problems?*

RZ: Very seldom do we have a really wet season. Working with the biodynamic method, the plants take the extremes so much better than with conventional farming. I observe it over and over again. The plants are not under so much stress, they are more in balance. I hardly have fungus problems. I never water my garden except maybe, the head lettuce beginning to leaf and strawberries when they start setting fruit.

PS: *How do you use the 501(5x)? How is it different from 501?*

RZ: We only used it twice. In the field it is hard to compare with the 501 since we are not doing tests. A farm is different. I only saw the effect on the strawberries, maybe the 501 would have done it too.

PS: *Do you have any growing tips to share in using the biodynamic preparations?*

RZ: Each garden and each individual is different. You cannot dish out recipes. In one way, working with preps you have to do what comes from within yourself. To do the practical part, like putting the compost preps into a compost pile, a child can do it, an idiot can do it.

The compost pile is made with TLC [tender loving care]. Nice shape, nice moisture, before you put the preps in. You have to learn to take care of the compost pile first. It really has to be made with care. It depends on the individual. These are tools, the preps. The compost pile is the heart of the whole farm or garden. Doing biodynamics is from within. First, one has to become a good farmer or gardener and then make the next step where the heart and mind is there to use the biodynamic method and working with the preps. If the heart or mind isn't in it, the preps may not work for you.

PS: *Do you use one of the garden calendars?*

RZ: On the farm, to go by the calendar can be difficult, so many things to do in the spring. You can aim for certain things and try to work with that. In a garden, it would be easier. You have to play a role, you have to find out why certain things happen, you need to observe things, weather patterns are not the same everywhere. Years back, I planted peas and beans on a lion day [when the moon in the constellation of the fire sign Leo the Lion, it is considered the most advantageous time to sow seeds and for seed saving] and they did not do well. You cannot be too rigid. If you feel it's the right time to do something in the garden, you do it. From the calendar, you can see if it is a leaf period, to plant a leaf crop, but you have to know that it is right to do this from within yourself, not just from a calendar. The best seeding out and planting days are the two days before the full moon.

To really do something is at the time of Michaelmas. It is that weekend near to Michaelmas that all the fall preps are made, chamomile, dandelion, oak bark and horns. This is put into the ground as well as the 502. That's our Michaelmas Festival. Depending on the weather, we dig up these preps usually in the second weekend of May.

PS: *When do you dig up 504?*

RZ: It comes out of the ground in July. It stays in the whole year. The stinging nettle is cut in full bloom in July. Then, it goes into the ground, the whole plant, uncut, made into bundles. This is the way my father did it and he learned this from the Agriculture Course.

PS: *From your lifetime of using the biodynamic preparations, is there a specific experience or reason that comes to mind why you do this, why you grow biodynamically?*

RZ: It's part of me. If I prep the compost pile or I spray the preps for all these years it's the way I grew up and I never gave it a thought. Biodynamics and homeopathic medicine are similar. You feel connected and want them to work with you. You cannot sell or preach biodynamics. It depends on the individual. The walk of the talk is different. As I heard it from people saying it's hard, "Lots of words, but not of deeds, it's like a garden full of weeds."

At garden workshops for beginners at Michael Fields, I used always a practical picture, a comparison like a person who starts learning to play a cello or violin. First he/she is very clumsy. Through continuously practicing, he/she is getting better and better and may have then a special connection to one or two strings like A or C and so it is for the person who wants to use the biodynamic preps. The more he/she practices it, the better the person becomes. The musician is listening to the tone of the cello and the farmer or gardener is observing the soil, plants

and animals, listening to the inner part of him/herself.

I'm just a house gardener. The third graders come to learn from the Waldorf School [from Chicago and outside Milwaukee]. Some have food allergies. Somebody can't eat this or that, it's psychological, it's being afraid. They eat everything here and they are fine.

In the 1960s, a friend of my in-laws said she couldn't eat spinach. She was allergic toward the chemicals. She ate my spinach fresh or cooked and she did not have any problems with that.

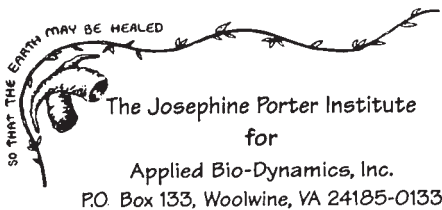
Rudolf Steiner mentioned it already in 1924 that at the end of the [twentieth] century, the plants won't be able to feed mankind anymore because they are so degenerated, because the earth is sick. The biodynamic preps, when using them will be able to heal the earth, will bring the heavenly and earthly forces together, but without the human being making and using the biodynamic preps which are forces, it cannot come about.

"Evading questions is not the attitude of a true scientist. If one tackles them one comes to the factor in organic development that Goethe called the inner principle, 'entelechy' or the 'self-determining principle'. Anyone who thinks this inner principle has no reality because it cannot be perceived with the senses – that is, anyone who believes purely materialistic observation to be all that is needed in the organic sphere – fails to take account of extremely important factors in the development of organisms. In that case it is not surprising to find that the insights gained are not enough to explain some phenomena."

Immanuel Voegelé, "Transforming plant species and varieties" *Demeter*, monthly German journal of biodynamic farming practice, No.12, 1938. (Adalbert Count Keyserlingk, *Developing Biodynamic Agriculture – Reflections on Early Research* (London: Temple Lodge, 1999), 61–62.

“There were indeed times when people actually knew that through certain practices they undertook, they made themselves fit to care for growing plants.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, First Discussion, p. 86



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