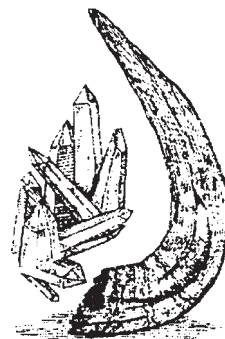


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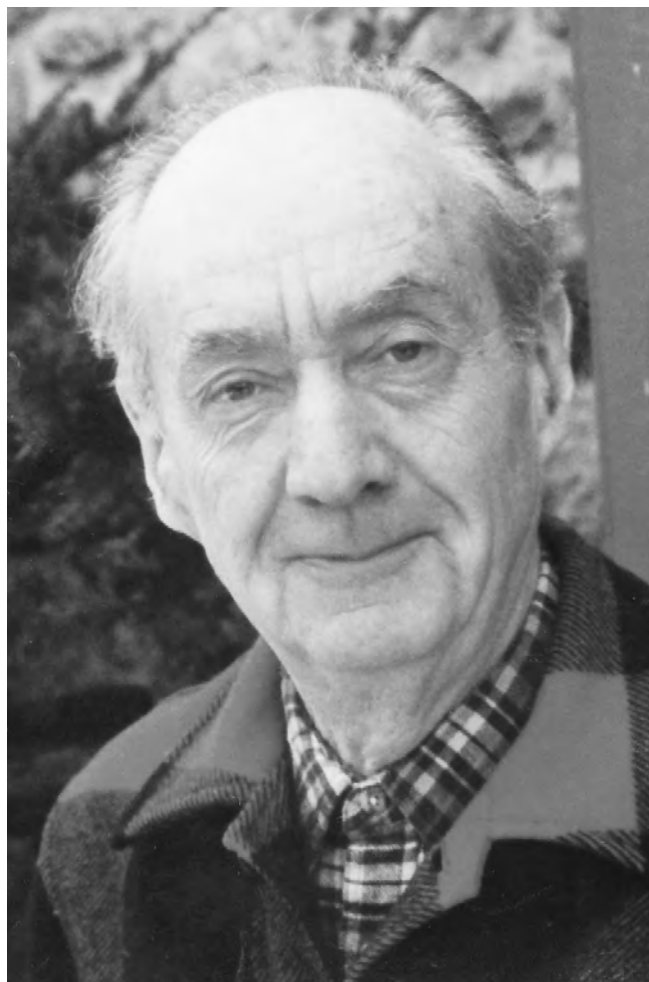
Nick Franceschelli

An Interview with Hartmut von Jeetze

Every once in a while you meet someone in whose presence your back gets just a little bit straighter, and wonder if you've recently done or said something that you should be ashamed of, because you know this person can read you like an open book. Hartmut von Jeetze is such a human being. When you meet him you know that he stands for something. He has lived and worked for the Camphill movement for most of his adult life. Camphill villages are intentional, land-based communities that serve the needs of handicapped and developmentally disabled people. Rudolf Steiner's insights into the fundamental nature of the human being as well as his radically new perspectives on so-called handicapped individuals are the basis for the daily operation of a Camphill community. Also intrinsic to most all the Camphills that I am familiar with is biodynamic gardening and farming. Agriculture is often the foundation on which the whole village life is built. Hartmut has pioneered biodynamic agriculture at Camphill locations in Scotland, New York, Minnesota and Pennsylvania. He brings a lifetime of hard-won, thoughtful and thought-provoking observations to the subject of biodynamic agriculture and its potential for bringing healing to a sick society.

Nick Franceschelli: *The first question that I thought of would be how you got started in biodynamics, in agriculture?*

Hartmut von Jeetze: I grew up in the village of one of the first biodynamic farms in East Germany, which originally was our parents' farm. It was a farm in Silesia, about an



Continued on page 5

Hartmut von Jeetze

Notes

In December 2001, Nick Franceschelli sat down with Hartmut von Jeetze and asked him all the right questions. Hartmut's answers are engaging insights expressed with heartfelt spontaneity, derived from a lifetime of experience in biodynamic farming and gardening practices.

Also in this issue is a report by Dana Pauly of the recent meeting in Copake, New York of biodynamic practitioners from across the country to discuss "The Future of Preparation Making in North America".

Other features include reviews of newly released publications available from the JPI book section. Perry Clutts reviews *The Holy Order of Water* by William E. Marks; the emphasis of this book is the need for greater spiritual understanding of the priceless water resources that we cannot live without. For those who want to become better acquainted with the night sky, Hugh Courtney reviews *Star and Planet Almanac 2002 Monthly Guide to the Sky at Night* by Liesbeth Bisterbosch. Finally, you may have to find yet another place to hang on the wall a new garden calendar from Australia; Hugh reviews Brian Keats *North-ern Star Calendar – Easter 2002–2003 Easter*.

Patricia Smith, Editor

Executive Search

The search for an executive director is soon to enter the stage of interviewing candidates. The board of directors fully expects success in the search for an executive director, thus ensuring a continuing presence for JPI in the preparation work in America.

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*)

Applied Biodynamics

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The Editor, *Applied Biodynamics*

P.O. Box 133

Woolwine, VA 24185, U.S.A.

Phone: (276)930-2463

Fax: (276)930-2475

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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.

Board of Directors

Jim Marquardt (Winchester, VA), President

Gerry Nottingham (Charleston, WV), Vice-President

Hugh Courtney (Woolwine, VA), Secretary

Preparation Making Meeting February 15–17, 2002

At least forty-three people attended the recent meeting of “The Future of Preparation Making in North America” in Copake, New York. This was the first nationwide biodynamic meeting dedicated to sharing experiences and discussing the making of the biodynamic preparations.

Participants represented farms and interests from California, New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Oregon, Vermont, Canada, the Josephine Porter Institute and the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, among others.

The gathering was a time of sharing methods and exploring the myriad of questions that surround the multifaceted tasks of preparation making now and in the future:

- How much of various preparations need to be used?
- How do we ensure the quality of preparations?
- How does the farm individuality relate to preparation making?
- Where do our herbs, sheaths and horns come from?
- What is the best forum for sharing information regarding the preparations and experimentation?
- What role should the BDA play in preparation making and distribution?

Regionalization of preparation making was discussed at length, and regional groups (presently functioning at varying degrees of coordination) shared their efforts, successes

and challenges. A renewed impulse to strengthen and coordinate regional groups developed from these discussions, with several groups planning meetings and agendas for the upcoming months. Participants also brought samples of preparations to share with the group. As usual, with such an initial and foundational gathering of interests, there were many more questions than answers.

In closing the conference, participants enjoyed musical entertainment. Heartfelt was the sincere outpouring of gratitude for the preparation work that has been done at the Josephine Porter Institute over the years; as a sign of appreciation for Hugh Courtney’s contribution to biodynamics, a veil painting by artist Helen Chamberlain entitled “Etheric Forms, Etheric Forces”, was presented to Hugh by Christy Korrow on behalf of friends of JPI.

All agreed upon the need for more and continued sharing by those involved in preparation making work. Part of moving consciously and collectively into the future will be the continued annual meeting of this group. In sharing and working with each other may we bring the rhythms of the biodynamic preparation work truly and consciously into the rhythms of our lives, now and into the future.

Dana Pauly works with a small vegetable CSA in Nelson County, Virginia.

Book Reviews

Northern Star Calendar — Easter 2002–2003

by Brian Keats

For the serious student of celestial rhythms and their effects on soil and plants, we can welcome one more entry in the planting calendar sweepstakes. In this instance we have a very colorful presentation of the various rhythms involved each month, especially in regards to the moon’s passage through the heavens. Mr. Keats is especially interested in the aspect of astronomical weather forecasting, and specifically provides space to maintain rainfall records throughout the month, as well as space to note weather phenomena associated with various positions of the moon. A particularly helpful chart of the sky at sunset is also provided each month as a further aid to discerning patterns that may be helpful in forecasting the weather.

There are a number of immediate differences in this cal-

endar in comparison to either *Stella Natura* 2002 or *Working with the Stars* 2002. The *Northern Star Calendar* covers the period from Easter of 2002 through Easter of 2003, rather than being based on the usual January to December yearly calendar. This calendar may be particularly helpful to those in the western part of the United States, since it is based on Pacific Standard Time, although it does not take into account the factor of daylight-saving time. In addition, the exact time of the moon’s entrance into each constellation is given to permit the grower to research the question as to the boundaries of each constellation. The constellational boundaries used by Brian Keats differ, however, from those used in the other two calendars mentioned above, which are based on astronomical boundaries. In the

case of the Keats calendar, constellational boundaries are those that have been ascertained by Paul Platt. Earlier boundaries determined by Paul Platt and used by *Stella Natura* a few years ago delineated constellational dimensions of precisely 30 degrees of arc for each constellation; though it seems that such precise constellational arcs are no longer regarded as correct by Paul Platt's current research. Space for planting and work notes is limited, but should not be deemed a serious shortcoming. This calendar should

be particularly helpful in educating the practitioner to a greater attunement to celestial rhythms throughout each month, and a greater awareness of astronomical phenomena regarding the planets, in particular, the moon. A useful companion to the two calendars mentioned above. Published by Brian Keats, Bowral, Australia. (Available from JPI for \$10.00 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.)

—Reviewed by Hugh Courtney

Star and Planet Almanac 2002 – Monthly Guide to the Sky at Night

By Liesbeth Bisterbosch

This well presented booklet is an extremely helpful aid to naked eye astronomy, and is recommended to anyone who wishes to become better acquainted with what is actually happening in the heavens throughout the year. With the aid of the charts in this spiral bound booklet, one can readily track the various planets through the night skies during the entire course of the year. One can learn to recognize the various constellations with the help of the monthly charts, which provide a map of the sky at three different intervals: approximately 45 minutes after sunset, at midnight, and approximately 45 minutes prior

to sunrise. By using the various sky maps for each month, as well as comparing positions of the constellations in preceding and following months, one can quickly learn to recognize not only the various constellations, but also can identify the brightest stars with ease. In this work, we truly have a valuable tool for reacquainting ourselves with the wonder of the heavens. Published by Hawthorn Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, Great Britain. (Available from JPI for \$16.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.)

—Reviewed by Hugh Courtney

The Holy Order of Water – Healing Earth's Waters and Ourselves

by William E. Marks

Book review by Perry Clutts

No longer are we able to safely drink water from a stream or river. Pollutants from factories and wastewater treatment plants, destruction of rainforests and over-irrigation of farmland have taken that possibility from us by contributing to the deterioration of water quality. William Marks not only tells us the history of this deterioration, but also encourages us to become more aware of our water and provides suggestions of what we can do to reverse the situation. He describes water's history, spiritual reasons we should care about water, and the healing powers embodied in water.

The Holy Order of Water is motivational. It challenges us to become more aware of our most important resource. The author delivers a compelling story about the role of water in the creation of the universe. He discusses the water 'myth' and how there might be more truth to these myths than science can explain. He draws from familiar names in water research including Theodor Schwenk and Viktor Schauberger, and describes subjects such as vortex energy and living water.

This was a real global eye-opener for a person living in the temperate climate of the eastern U.S., where water appears to be plentiful. *The Holy Order of Water* helps bring global understanding and appreciation for our most important resource.

William Marks began his journey of water appreciation during a 7,000-mile horseback trip from California to Maine. After working as an environmental water quality analyst in New Jersey, he started his own water quality-testing lab in Martha's Vineyard, where he founded *Martha's Vineyard Magazine*. Published by Bell Pond, Great Barrington, MA, 2001. (Available from JPI for \$18.00 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.)

Perry Clutts runs a farm-scale composting site and through his interest in composting, discovered biodynamics. He moved back to his family farm in Circleville, Ohio and is in transition to convert the land to biodynamic farming and gardening.

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hour from Koberwitz. My parents after having listened to [Rudolf] Steiner's lectures on agriculture decided they wanted to convert my dad's farm to biodynamics. So I grew up in that environment. Our family farm was about 226 hectares [One hectare is nearly two and a half acres.]. We grew up in Pilgramshain where it was the largest farm of the village. The impressions you get as a child are very important because they set, actually, your motives for later on, but you might not know it at the time.

NF: *How old were you at that time when that happened, when the conversion took place?*

HvJ: I wasn't born.

NF: *Oh, this was before you were born that they already decided to convert it.*

HvJ: I was born in 1928 and 1924 was the year when the agriculture lectures by Steiner were given. Both of my parents were enthusiastic. My dad said, "Let's convert the farm." They had just married in 1924 and when my mother, having become the wife of the farmer, and, as always was the case on the large farms, there was great expectation of her in the village. The first thing my mother discovered was that the farm was heavily indebted, mismanaged by the previous administrator, and she said, "He has got to go." When they converted it to biodynamic principles, I think it was pretty disastrous to begin with because at that time nobody knew how to go about it. They just went cold turkey.

NF: *They didn't have a conversion plan.*

HvJ: Yes, of course, nobody did quite know how to go about it. So the farm in the end went to receivership and it was taken over by the [Agricultural] Experimental Circle. A couple of guarantors had to be there and an industrialist put forward the money to continue the farm and build it up as a biodynamic farm. My parents were told, "You have to get a capable administrator to run the farm," which was Immanuel Voegelé.

NF: *Ah, there's a connection.¹*

HvJ: He took over our farm in Pilgramshain and ran it. There is a whole long story of how you grow up in a rural village, like here in this country. At that time, everyone had farms – small ones, large ones, like everywhere else in Germany and also many countries in Europe. In Pilgramshain we also had small farmers, some only had a cow or two; some had only a little garden in the back of a yard. Others had fairly good farms. So there are different sized farms everywhere in place. Socially, although everyone's independent of course, you look at how do the neighbors get on? So what's important in this is the social context in which you live and work. On that depends

more than one thinks, because agriculture is fundamentally a social challenge, an expression of social forms. Growing crops is self-understood.

NF: *For you, was it just the natural way to farm, or was there a point in your life where you came to it consciously and said, "What is going on out here?"*

HvJ: To answer that, I'd have to make a jump. First of all, when you grow up in such a rural area, you have to recall that, like in this country and in other western countries and in Germany too, that was the time when the Second World War came when the men went back to the war. I was at the age of —

NF: *Ten?*

HvJ: No, I was older than that. At the age of 15 in 1943 I was spending from 6:30 in the morning to 8:30 at night on a reaper-binder, operating the handles to get the harvest done, the crops cut. So that was my first lesson. And also very soon after the harvest was in, before long, Mr. Voegelé asked, "Well, maybe you can handle a team of horses," so with a skim plow I skimmed the stubble over, because that was important that you straight away turn the stubble over. These were practices at the time. Everything was mechanically based. You learned very quickly how to handle horses, how to mow, how much work you can do an hour, so that's very good schooling. I wasn't the only one – everyone worked. School closed like here in the summer. During summer holidays the fields were harvested. Why, if there was any gleanings left over to be done, because there was a shortage of food, people would pick up the last ears of wheat and things to have enough to take home for maybe an extra pot of cereal that you didn't have the money to buy or couldn't get because there wasn't any. There was quite a bit of shortness of food. So we learned how to make do. You learned through observation.

We'll make a break there. So, biodynamic agriculture, of course, you see when you're ten or twelve years old, you're not really in a position to make judgments as to what farming is. You just go by what you've seen, which actually is to say, today you can't underestimate how much imitation, examples and real need matter in how to establish a proper training and proper motivations for people to work. So what do I mean?

When thrashing days came around in the yard, there were barns in the upper part of the village and you could see how much grain came down the spout of whatever they were thrashing. My parents and others would speak and talk about the biodynamic results; what were the crop equivalents of biodynamic crops to that of fertilized grown things. I didn't really make a formal judgment, but you could tell the difference in the quality of the food right

away. And I know, that for instance, the sugar beets that we grew supported our farm and it was still a biodynamic farm until 1945 when the Soviet army occupied East Germany. The sugar count was always higher because there wasn't as much water in sugar beets so they had usually very good results in that quantity-wise; they sometimes cut short in the amounts but it came out the better quality product in the end. I didn't take this in that consciously.

NF: *So at what point did you begin to take a conscious interest in biodynamics, "This is something I'd like to do," because you must have had some choices, even though in wartime, maybe not as many as other people did.*

HvJ: I didn't intend on becoming a farmer. I was going to be an engineer. It's through the war situations and the complete collapse of Germany that I decided to take up farming consciously. However, growing up in farming areas, I knew already that in the war situation or after the war, the first thing that you have to see is how you get the food on the table. So because of that, and there being all this work on the farm, I had no choice actually after the war. Everything was broken down, so when I got back to where my parents lived as refugees, not the farm where we grew up, that was gone, but in West Germany. So the first thing you did is, you went to a farm to pick up what you did before. So I did farming on another farm in Thuringia. It was okay you know, haymaking and all that. Learned quite a lot about the practice, the practical aspects of agriculture, that is the most important, even for biodynamic farmers. Agriculture is an activity which is foremost based on physically moving one substance to another place, I mean it's a transportation business. That's what it all comes down to. Whether it's biodynamic or not for me came secondary.

I stirred my first 500 when I was ten years old. About eight to ten youngsters, we were from the school and after school you stirred 500, each in a wooden bucket of about two and a half gallons and sang songs with it. There was an old man, he's still around by the way, he should be a hundred years old now. Mr. [Kurt] Willmann was the one who conducted the stirring and whilst we were stirring 500, he was grinding quartz for 501.

NF: *Nice!*

HvJ: So what you do as children, it's a challenge whether you can make the same whirlpool as the guy next to you and he [Kurt Willmann] would look at how we would do it so that the proper whirlpool was created, how it changed around. Soon we discovered that everyone had the same experience, that after about half an hour it got even easier.

NF: *Yeah, I've heard that too.*

HvJ: It's really a fact. So after an hour, that last ten min-

utes actually went pretty quick. So I stirred my first preparations in 1938. I formed no judgments, as I said before. What I did is I took in through observation, the qualities. One of the things that I remember very clearly is the quality, and how to grow quality foods was practiced also on other farms. When I did my agriculture training after the war, I decided I wanted to do this on an orthodox farm.

NF: *Oh!?*

HvJ: Yes sir. Because unless I had a base of comparison, I wouldn't be able to form a real valid judgment about the quality or the virtue of biodynamic farming versus orthodox farming. And I've never regretted to this day having done that.

NF: *Was it a good farm that you found?*

HvJ: It was a very good farm I found. The farmer was an approved agricultural teacher under the German federal system, so he said, "Well you can stay with the farm." I could have gone to a community where they were practicing biodynamic farming —

NF: *Sure.*

HvJ: I was not interested in that. Community life was not for me at that time.

NF: *Interesting.*

HvJ: I wanted to know, how is the profession practiced, and unless I have a valid comparison, I couldn't form a valid judgment. That's how I did four years of agricultural training on a state-approved farm, so the teacher was very good. One of the crops we grew was potatoes, on contract for seed. Our yield of potatoes was upwards of forty tons per hectare. Now we put on fertilizers by the tons, and at that time, some of it was done by hand, and if you've not done it, it's a worthwhile thing to do, because you smell that stuff all right. But through doing this, I could see how the chemical fertilizers, mostly the nitrogen fertilizers, would form crusts on top of the soil, and the erosion of the soil was increasing rapidly. But for the rest, manuring was done and all that. The crops, the potatoes for instance, we had enormous crops. But the keeping quality of the potatoes was not that good. We grew seed potatoes mostly, kept them through the winter, stored them and all, we learned the whole thing. On the farm we also learned how to care for animals, from calves right up to, well, the works. You had examinations, you had to know from plowing, harrowing a field, to cultivation, calculations of seeding, everything. It was all done at that time, there were no weed killers. You used mechanical —

NF: *Cultivation?*

HvJ: Yes, cultivation. That is an important thing because when you do that, and we had to hoe weeds in both the wheat fields and the other grain fields, you had a seed drill

that had to be driven exactly. If by that time you didn't know how to handle horses, you sure had to learn it quickly else you wouldn't get the job. So the disciplines, the self-discipline in farming, was and I consider still is, one of the most important things. Because through that alone do you see and experience everything; the quality of the soil, the tilth, the sequence of cultivating and preparing a field for seeding. That had to be done in an exacting form, a sequence of steps so that your seeds were in the best or optimum position to grow properly.

How to plan a four-year, or eight, or a ten-year rotation of every single acre you have, and that was taken as a necessary base, taken for granted, if you were to become a biodynamic farmer. Once you've been through such a training, then you can proceed through journeymanhood on different farms. You learn by comparison, with other people who have other requests. That allows you to understand the fundamentals of the living, the biodynamic laws on a more objective level. It forms a deeper level by comparison, of seeing the essentials and scuttle the unessential things. With this we come to biodynamics.

On the ordinary farm in Germany, we would mix silage. We dug a big pit, you put two loads or three of grass into it and you drove your ox inside. It was too deep, they couldn't come out, so when the ox was eating, he was also trampling down the stuff, and you filled up the pit until it was full and then let it settle down again and again. The amount of juice that ran out was enormous. Later on the farms where I worked, the shrinkage due to the water content in the crops was substantial. Yes, the quality was okay I thought, until for instance, when we put manure on the fields. We took ten tons to the acre of manure which was a general average of what you put per acre, that would be hectare, forty tons per hectare.

NF: *Well, it's almost two and a half acres to a hectare, so if you were putting forty tons to a hectare, we're looking at about fifteen tons an acre. That's a lot.*

HvJ: That's a lot. That was taken for granted unless you put it so that you had it all covered. That was all done by hand, no manure spreaders.

NF: *Wow.*

HvJ: It goes quick. With four people, you can do as much as a manure-spreader. Yes sir. This was all when handwork was still the order of the day. Now I know I say that because without that you have no real ability to judge agriculture. You just can't. You're not really entering into the process and if you don't enter into the process, you don't know what your soil is like, you don't know together with the weather what the situation tells you almost every day. So let me switch to the next thing.

Through a training course, I still had six months time before leaving for Scotland, where I was going to go because I felt I really wanted to get out of Germany after everything was broken down. I worked for a couple of months on a large German farm. It was very good. When you go to another farm, they watch how you work. From handwork to horse work, how you handle yourself, whether you know what you're doing and the less you talk the more you do, the better the impression you give. Period. That's why I still don't like interviews; I don't like talking about things. I want to tell you, as a farmer, talking is not the way to do it. It is learning from A to Z, everything, so that you can know in the end your whole year backwards and forwards. We were taught that if you farm, you will find out very quickly the latitude of error in the whole growing season is at the best, two weeks. If you botch up something, you have very little elasticity, because the whole thing is planned out, so you have to plan your farm from back to front, from how your implement is fixed up, how you store them. So by spring, your plows and harrows are in the front and not your combine. If you don't do that, you would probably need two or three times the amount of sheds to store your stuff. I only need to walk through a farm and see how they store their machinery, how their manure yard looks, and that's all you have to see. Because it is still what the human beings, we put in by way of planning, consequential planning, that we can know we are either in control or are not in control of situations. You have to be free so that you can make your decisions within the orbit of what Nature permits or sets as the syllabus. In other words, that's how it works.

I was given a job, which was harvesting fodder beets by hand. After two or three days, the horseman had to go away for a day, so they asked me would I take over his team of horses. That's quite a thing because you can bet that everyone will watch you, how you handle those horses, how you load the manure, how you cart it out, how you pull it and all the rest, which was no problem for me.

I'd learned by that time – that's not in order to boast – but you see, you cannot in agriculture, in farming at that time, you could not go to the next step; which happened when one day they asked, "Would you please help in sowing wheat?" It was a whole day's job, a large field on the order of forty to fifty acres or so and seeding was done in straight rows. At the end of the rows, I was driving the horses and steering the front end of the seed drill straight as a rod. At the end of the row you had to turn around on the dime so you go back with the inside wheel, on its own

track and go back for the next row. Nobody had time to talk. You tuned in to the act of seeding, which was actually a sacred thing. And you don't have to think about it, suddenly as you go on, you know that this whole field is changing by us putting on that seed. At the end of the day when you were done with it, the folks said you shouldn't walk over the field, except one person with a little thin harrow to go over that field. So when the field was seeded, everyone knew, it's a thing where your human discipline of practice of agriculture actually is the equivalent of a meditative work done in the physical world, in a sense that's what it amounts to.

NF: *This is an important point, but I didn't think we would get at it so quickly, that the consciousness of all farmers that were worth their salt must have been different than many farmers that you see today; without trying to generalize too much, but even including biodynamic farmers. I don't think that we nowadays have that consciousness. Do you think that's something we can regain, or is it going to disappear completely and have to be started over from scratch?*

HvJ: That's a question I would like the public to answer. Because if you would go to high school and to college and to university, you are going through the same processes. You won't make a bachelor's degree or a master's or a doctor's degree unless certain disciplines become second nature. In agriculture it's the same thing. If you read Steiner's agriculture lectures, you will find very quickly, farming is meditative work. How you approach things is important. But it's got to be so that the outer disciplines and the inner disciplines begin to become experiential to you. If you read the article or the lecture I gave last year on *The Four Ethers in Their Relation to Agriculture*, you will find an exact description of what I mean.² Let me give you a more simple answer.

In Scotland where I went, when you farmed, your neighbors watch you just the same. All you do is you do your work. You don't have to say a word. Your neighbor will come and say, "Oh, you're the new guy around here." And the way you made your rows, let's say for potatoes or turnips, which were the chief row crops farmers grew, the rows had to be as straight as a rod. That was important for everyone. Because when you drive down the road, even a couple miles on either side, you always instinctively watched how the people were planting their fields. The rows of potato fields or cabbage fields, looked at from the distance, like a pair of corduroy pants and you just take it for granted because the human attitude and discipline of how to treat the Earth was still the number one thing. After a while you know it when you work on a farm. But that's not yet biodynamics. Now let me switch to biodynamics.



So you come to another country [Scotland], having taken over a farm from somebody else. On that farm we put manure out, which was stored in the wintertime, turned around and soon you had composted manure. We only had about three tons to the acre to put on our fields. I figured three tons, that's not half enough to grow a proper crop. Well, when it came to the turnips growing up and being thinned and all that, by the time we harvested, we had as much of a crop per acre as the people next door had. If that's what you get from biodynamic composting and farming, there you have it, you didn't need any more evidence as to the virtue of its principles.

NF: *So when you say three tons of manure, you mean composted manure?*

HvJ: Yes, per acre. Not really composted, but —

NF: *Broken down.*

HvJ: So with three to three and a half tons per acre to get the same result as with ten, that's the kind of comparison I had by that base of comparison. The same is with silage. We would fill up the silage pit with rough silage, roll it in. At that time we didn't have a tractor, we took a Land Rover, you rolled it in and rolled it in and it wouldn't go down to the degree I was used to from the commercial farms. So I think, "Well the weight of the Land Rover was too light." That wasn't the case at all. It would settle some, but it didn't

settle much at all. Nothing ran out of the bottom. And by the time it was covered up, and we were feeding it, we had the most delicious clover grass silage I have ever had, with maybe a third at most of the compaction required for your final product from what I was used to. And the quality in feed was enormous for the cattle and that convinced me about the biodynamic principle. Period. No one needed to tell me anymore about it. In fact you'll find in one of the articles I've written about horses that when we ran out of our biodynamic oats, the horses wouldn't eat the bought oats, although they looked much better.³

NF: *They turned up their noses at them? All right now, let's get more specific. When did you start actually making preparations, consciously making them? You were responsible for this project.*

HvJ: I first participated in West Germany where the preparations were made by the Schmidt farm, and that was very meticulously well done. I also learned about them already in an agriculture course in 1947 in Stuttgart. So preparation making and the knowledge of what the sheaths were for in the preparations, I got in these courses. This training formed a very good base for biodynamic agriculture.

NF: *Okay.*

HvJ: Of course I saw it in Germany, because the dandelion preparation was buried, and the yarrow preparations hanging up between the two chimneys on the roof somewhere in the village, that's the way you do it. You make jokes about it, but I saw that, and sure I knew all about it. That was already known to me, also how to bury them. In the '50s I got my first copy of the Agriculture Course and that was fascinating. And why? Because it helped me to have a new dimension to the chemistry, which was for me not a question, but the living chemistry over and against the outer chemistry of N-P-K. Through that first experience in Scotland, I got double confirmation. Through the contrast, and also through the examples of how little manure [was applied], we got the same results plus the increase in fertility, and not erosion of the soil. Plus, contrary to some of the farms in Germany, where there were hardly any earthworms in there; where in plowing we had to get double layer plows which were subsoil and moldboard plows in one because we had to break up the hardpan underneath. I learned enough through the ordinary farming to know how detrimental it was. There were just no earthworms left. Nothing. Come to Scotland, the seagulls will come behind you; whoa, one crowd picking up the earthworms. And the tilth in the soil, all the things that I experienced, I had a basis for comparison in myself, going right back to the years when I worked in the fields with my dad and others. So that was more of a confirmation than I could have possibly asked for.

And then you see the preparation making as a discipline. I could see why you use these different organs. I mean, if someone has guts, you have to put the chamomile in the gut, why big deal, that was not a —
NF: *Stumbling block of any kind.*

HvJ: No. I'm saying all these things because unless you have a personal experience by way of relationship to the soil, you won't get too easily to the same point of beginning even to think of biodynamic agriculture. So what we have lost is the personal relationship to the land.

NF: *I mean, when you say, "we", we're talking about everybody.*

HvJ: Yes, sure.

NF: *Not just somebody who runs a monocrop operation.*

HvJ: Right. However, number one, it doesn't take long before by walking over the fields, you will see how the fields are treated by the way the crops come out of the ground and how they appear. Period. You don't have to be necessarily clairvoyant but you are in a certain sense. Because we all experience the world much more subtly than we outwardly see. I'll give you an example. I think examples are always necessary.

If you drive through a landscape, you probably know how when you drive past a farm that's abandoned, there's an aura of disappointment over the fields, over the farm, and almost like a ghost-like situation. I know people have told me in some parts of the Midwest, it's scary to drive through landscapes particularly in the nighttime. Wherever human beings have been but have —

NF: *Abandoned it.*

HvJ: Yes. So Nature listens to what we do. I'll give you a positive side to it. When we took over the farm in Minnesota, there were hardly any birds. Once we started cultivating the fields, very quickly, normally the sparrows, they come first, but very soon swallows and other birds come in. It's amazing, the truth of what the presence of human beings does to a landscape is not to be underestimated.

NF: *For better or for worse.*

HvJ: Yes. Still today, when you drive from one state to another state, it only takes about five minutes from say, New York up to Massachusetts, from Massachusetts to Vermont, you can experience a different social climate, and there's no mistaking, that it is related to human beings thinking, the results of which affect the atmosphere in which we live.⁴

NF: *I would never argue with it because I experience it myself. I go to Great Barrington [located at the border of New York and Massachusetts] so often and I always know I'm on the other side of the mountains, you can feel it.*

HvJ: Well, that is not at all to boast about.

NF: *No, I don't boast about it.*

HvJ: Well, obviously, you don't. But when we speak about biodynamics, biodynamics is unfortunately a term I would have long changed. When I was on the [Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association] board of directors I said we should change that term.

NF: *To?*

HvJ: Biodynamic farming and gardening. Because that's what it is. It otherwise is like an abstraction, which you can argue about and discuss. We're talking about human beings to whom God gave the whole of this Earth to till in a proper, appropriate fashion. That's what I'm talking about.

NF: *So, now I remember when [Alex] Podolinsky was in Kimberton, we had to work on training our eye to recognize good biodynamic agriculture and I remember you found the right crops that still had the right kind of will in them to grow in Kerry Sullivan's garden. Do you find, when you take a look over the fields and gardens now that you've got a pretty good eye for where biodynamics is effective and where it's not?*

HvJ: Sure. You should be able to and you can train yourself. I think with Podolinsky, it doesn't mean it's any hocus-pocus or voodoo about it. What it is, is that from the weather right into what we do in the daytime, the same elements, nitrogen in the air which we inhale, oxygen and all the other elements; we all the time take in the same substances that also work in agriculture. If you have a field you don't plow, after a while your topsoil will decrease unless you tend to it. Because the elements above the ground need to be able to go below. That is the active cultivation principle, what is below needs to be lifted above. That's what Steiner calls the ABC's, along with how calcium and silica work. These are fundamentals that are not only out in the field. We all live on the basis of these. After all, we have calcium outside in our skull, in the head and inside in our spine from the neck down. So we have the same principle, what's outside in the one and inside in the other. In the practice of farming we bring these elements into an opposite position, from where by natural inclination they would otherwise revert to. A reduction of what would not be agriculture, but a balance that Nature would establish, yes. Then it would go back either to prairie or to woods, and then the natural sequence of revival would take its own course.

NF: *Such as fires or floods or something like that.*

HvJ: Yes. Fires, floods or take cedar seeds. You see some untilled fields, after three or four years, you already have cedars in there. The birds take the seeds, depending on what it is. And because Nature will make it that you first have poplars, then you have birches, they condition the

soil, the poplars or cottonwoods for the birches, the birches for the softwoods, then the hardwoods and in the end come the coniferous trees. That's how in reverse order, how the Earth acquired its mantle of plants. From the angiosperm to the gymnosperm.

NF: *I see.*

HvJ: That's the evolution.

NF: *All right. So let's talk about making preparations. If we're coming into a time now where we have to take on this work maybe more consciously because the Josephine Porters and the Hugh Courtneys won't do it anymore, what kind of an attitude or focus do we need to put toward doing this job well, if this is going to be effective for the future?*

HvJ: My experience tells me, and I'm not going by what I want to second guess; as human beings we are all the same. We usually learn best by our mistakes and by contrast. Only when your fields don't yield anymore to conventional treatment, do you begin to ask yourself what's happening? Now there I would like to mention one person whose research is singular among all others as to soil fertility, locally, regionally and around the whole globe, and that is David Pimentel from Cornell. Professor Pimentel has done research on the effect of fertilizers around the globe for decades. If you read his [Pimentel's findings], you can't but be astonished that no one has yet noticed what we're doing to this Earth. It is unbelievable. So to think we can do differently or to continue the way we do, I can't tell people to change. I would say: everyone has to come in their own way to begin to realize, "Wait a minute, we can't go on like this. What can I do to improve life to the land?" And the best advice I can give to a person who has reached this point is to start real small. Test for yourself, because we all by nature are doubtful. And so was I. I didn't take up biodynamic farming right away, although I knew [how to do] it. Because I said to myself, unless you learn it in the conventional way too, you're wasting your time. But when you move forward in a certain way, as I've tried to describe in this talk so far, you will begin to see and ask yourself, "All right, I have a new situation." That is the first step. The next is, "What to do with a particular field?" That depends on its potential.

Say there's a ten-acre field that's hilly and the soil is too poor to plow. What do you do with it? Well, one field at Copake [New York] we had a situation and we only discovered it was our neighbor who owned it. One day she came and she said, "The town of Copake wants to buy that ten-acre lot to make a dump there and I thought maybe you should like to know, to buy it." We bought it right away. It didn't grow even weeds, so poor it was. So what did we do? We talked to the forestry department and

said, "Can we plant trees?" Sure we can. So we planted it in a mixture of red pine, Japanese larch and tamaracks. And that field today, it should be thinned. It's a thick forest. So you have to know what you put in certain areas. But to have woods and forests, I would recommend anyone who wants to see the effects of the biodynamic principles would do well to consider to have a good stretch of woods or forest, because that's your investment for when your kids go to school or to college, twenty or thirty years down the road so you have some capital.

NF: *Nice! All right. So now, what is your assessment and maybe we've already hinted at it from what you've spoken about so far, why is biodynamics such a slow starter in this country, compared to other regions? Even now India, where it seems to be catching hold quickly, or New Zealand or Scandinavia, where biodynamics has made much more inroads in the consciousness, not just of the consumer, but of the farmers themselves. What's happening? What's not happening?*

HvJ: What's not happening is that for most people here in the West, to understand that personal relationship to the land, not only of one person, but of a group of human beings, of a village, matters.

NF: *The community, not just the farmer, but the surrounding community has to have a relationship to the land and landscape.*

HvJ: Well yes, that's how it used to be! What has disappeared in the last century by very rapid stages is the social interdependence between all the craftsmen, all the people in the village and the small towns, where the different faculties people had acquired over a period of say, 1200 years or so or mostly since the Middle Ages. The guilds, the trades, where all this was a synthesis of human social abilities created the social pattern as the basis for the changing of human beings' minds into learning things. But they also provided, if not to say, created the basic fabric of the social order, an order in which Nature, by way of harmonized landscapes becomes the social equivalent, complementing what human beings do on the land. This is of utmost importance for the future of agriculture and civilization! You have a wonderful example for this in the agriculture lectures. If you take what Rudolf Steiner describes in the seventh lecture in the Agriculture Course, how birds and trees or how insects and grasses belong together; there must always be a polarity between what you don't have yet and what you could accomplish. That's got to be a key attitude you have to acquire that won't let go of you anymore. If you listen to what we've discussed so far, then you will see I've tried to describe what are the situations from which I can learn to do things better. You cannot go out, I wouldn't go out and proselytize.

NF: *No, no. We're not going there.*

HvJ: Well, go easy. The evidence you have to be able to experience in such a way to a degree that you can share it with people, but not ever, persuade them; it has to be self-evident. And I would say the American attitude is still the very best. The demand and supply. But not the supply and demand. If you oversupply a demand that isn't there, you are inviting rejection. So all you can do is tend to your own turf first. That brings about an aspect of biodynamic agriculture that shouldn't be overlooked, that is, as Steiner speaks about it in the first lecture, where he says, the judgment over what is necessary or right or needed on a farm, can only be done by the farmer who walks over the field with the gardeners. Because you see, we need to realize, that he or she in walking over the farm, actually, often without knowing it, is doing meditative work. All around we have a dialogue with Nature. We are always in a dialogue relationship with Nature. You could say, who listens? The long and the short of what I'm trying to say is, the first thing is that I have to become modest in myself, and be able to appreciate and to acquire a gratitude towards the greatness of the world that is before me, right in front of my eyes. That makes it that you get other insights. Let me give you an example.

We had a residential school for children with developmental disabilities in Pilgramshain, right next to our home. These were handicapped individuals. I was supposedly not handicapped, which of course I was quite sure I wasn't. But when it came to sowing your own row of seeds on a bed, next to my row was a person who was handicapped. I can tell you exactly I felt, "My goodness, I hope my crop will grow better than this guy's." Because your judgmental attitude to the world often goes far deeper than we think. It's pretty close to self-confrontation with your own values.

NF: *So if I can say something, and you can see if this is the direction you want us to think. In America we've become disconnected from the place, to get Wendell Berry in here and Wes Jackson. And if we're going to create a demand, as you say for biodynamics, we have to do it as patiently and as well as possible without the expectation of—*

HvJ: You've got to do it first. You have to do it first. Therefore, your original question about making preparations, you should first read Steiner's lectures on agriculture, live with all the thoughts he brings to bear with respect to our human relationship to the earth. You have to be willing to get, well wait a minute, "Is this voodoo?" You have to get over it! You have to begin to work on yourself and get to know your land to the point where you begin to ask, "What did Rudolf Steiner give to us with these lectures?" How could this man as an initiate, how could he give such advice

as he did? Of course, it takes quite a bit of testing. He encouraged us to experiment too. I'll give you an example.

You take the Equisetum [BD #508]. One day I figured, well I'm not sure what is really true about having ninety-eight percent of silica in the ash content. So you know what I did? One day in the barn in Scotland, I put Equisetum tea in one jar and then next to it I took a bit of slaked lime [calcium hydroxide] and dissolved that in water and poured the lime out of it. So I had two jars each with a totally clear liquid in it. Now you should try that. If you take this one jar with Equisetum, and now put maybe half a cup of this [clear] lime fluid and pour it into the jar with the Equisetum liquid. It was like a thunderstorm! The precipitation process in the jar was enormous!

NF: *Was it because of silicic acid in the other solution, or why was that?*

HvJ: It was calcium and silica, polar opposites. And you shouldn't even ask, you should know that.

NF: *I sure don't.*

HvJ: But you know those things. Anyway, I began to make my own tests in order to check for myself. Is this stuff real or is it not? You have to do this. I'll give you another example.

In Minnesota we grew potatoes. We cut the potatoes and the second year we used the same cuttings, the third year too. One year someone had inadvertently taken some of the seed potatoes and had cooked them so we were short by a row and a half. So I went down to town, got the same Russet potatoes in town, planted the rest of those potatoes. You couldn't, you wouldn't believe the difference when these plants came up. Ours were enormously full and had hardly any Colorado [potato] beetles on them. Because we used the sprays, the Equisetum spray at the right time to enhance the light process of assimilation in the leaves. But then you had the last row and a half, those potatoes were scribbly and they were sick and they didn't even make the grade. Unfortunately at the time, I didn't take the camera out and take a picture.

NF: *That's all right. I don't think it would have convinced anybody else unfortunately, but I think it would have been helpful for ourselves to document what we know.*

HvJ: But you see, on the whole, I am reluctant to give interviews because it's not for showing off. However, it is experiences of this kind that make you humble. Beyond that, if I know that one acre of farming soil with earthworms in it, produce up to ten or twelve or up to twenty tons of humus in one year on that acre; you can't even imagine what that means. What do these simple worms do, picking up the sand from underneath the hardpan or wherever, then go up and pick up the last bits of what

you've sprinkled as compost on it in the fall time.

In addition, you should spray on your whole farm with 500. In the fall, from August on, the growing forces go down to the roots. So when the most strong inhalation process of Nature is out in the field, which it's a bit past it now [December], a couple months ago, if you spray 500 over your whole field, except in the woods; don't spray it in the woods, it won't work. Then those forces, the growing forces, they take those down right into the subsoil. There is no way that any human being can equal what that does.

Or, take well-matured biodynamic compost. If you spread a thin dressing of this on your lowland fields in the fall. It is the most important compost dressing you can have; but it shouldn't be this year's or last year's, it should be at least two, ideally three year old compost, which is going to be totally stabilized, but it must not be dead. You have to know when your compost becomes mature, but not dead. You spread this on your field, you can use your discer or spreader for the rows in winter, just throw a little on the back end, put it on your pastures, on your low-lying pastures, where you don't usually go and plow.

NF: *And let the worms pull it down?*

HvJ: The worms will pick it up like fish that you feed in a fish tank, in your aquarium. They pull it down. I can't even tell you what that does, because the next year you get clovers and legumes and flowers as a result of the phosphorus process strengthened to a degree that you can't even describe. People knew that. You read André Voisin, about agriculture during the First World War and it is all described. You don't have to be a biodynamic convert, not to become one, you just have to take what Nature puts in front of your nose. After awhile the things, the situations will tell you what they ask for. That's your next stage, and you should be able to have that kind of relationship, that is what Podolinsky has spoken about. How do we tune in with Nature in humility and the beings that at all times – noon, morning, night, every time, are there? If you do it for a long enough time, biodynamic agriculture becomes a reality to you. You have to have patience and allow time for yourself and patience to help people to watch and see in order to be able to help them. That is the biggest difficulty. I'll give you an example if I may.

NF: *Sure, please.*

HvJ: Because patience is the hardest commodity to get. I tip my hat to Hugh Courtney having done the preparations, but I do believe in a certain sense, it's a shortcut. But I don't blame him if he's gotten frustrated over it because unless you are yourself experiencing it, you are offering shortcuts; and shortcuts are helpful but are not allowing

people to go through the phases of self-recognition that go along with biodynamic farming and gardening. Once you do, it's not very hard to experience what happens in Nature. You don't necessarily have to tell people.

NF: *Sure.*

HvJ: But you will experience it, and the Nature beings, yes they come and help. If they don't, you have to ask yourself, "Why, did I trip up?" There's always a reason when you get tripped up.

NF: *Thank you very much. I think all the principles are in here that you've given us, even though I maybe didn't ask for them, you brought – you snuck them in there. And hopefully the message will come through because you've distilled a life-time's worth of, as you say, observation and practice into this, and it is very helpful. And if it's not helpful, then somebody's not listening. I guess.*

HvJ: May I respond to that for a moment, please? You see, when you get over seventy, you also have to reevaluate once more all your motives, and that's a tough one to do. We all have to do this at different ages again and again in our life. When you are asked, you should still be able to be there to answer questions, but always, particularly in this country, don't answer questions that weren't asked. It pushes people off. That is, when you're over enthusiastic of course, that is difficult to accept. You should only answer questions that have been asked and there's a deep reason behind it. Because in the end it is not you and I who farm, we are the servants in the living kingdom of Nature. Therefore, it is the living dynamics of Nature themselves we have to begin to grasp to understand what they ask of us, in what way we can help; that changes depending on where you are, what age. So you have to be patient with people who are younger, you have to respect people in the prime of their life who may do the same thing totally different from what you did, and you have to know where is my own next main step.

In northern Minnesota, we visited a farm, where the people had begun a CSA [Community Supported Agriculture]. I think it was organic. After four or five years into it, out on the plains there, he [the farmer] discovered walking over his fields where he hadn't done very much, that native grasses came back in and some legumes that hadn't been seen. When the university came in [asking], "How did you get these?" They couldn't understand how plants came back that were long gone. They aren't gone. You give Nature half a chance, it will replenish itself, but it needs the aid.

The stages of growth that every plant goes through should again be able to be accomplished in such a way that the forces that the Earth didn't have or doesn't have anymore can give new strength to become food; but for that

you have to have at least two cycles of rotations. That means in the third cycle of your rotation will your food be of such quality that it has stable nutritional value that is necessary for it to become proper food. I think what would be the most important thing is that we have new biochemical research laboratories like [Ehrenfried] Pfeiffer had, where the experiences would become documentable. I think that's a process that would have to be addressed – totally, objectively. My hope is that the Biodynamic Association would assume a new relationship, that we would find who is good in this soil science, all these things work together in a totally new form; where also the preparation making would not be dependent on one person who does it, however well-intended and well-done, but where that is part and parcel of a process that could show eventually that would be a future thing, that today what we seek in the search in DNA, should be able to be seen on a totally different level, from a different perspective – how to create stronger plants, animals and a stronger and healthy soil. That's it.

Notes

- 1) Nick Franceschelli, "An Interview with Ruth Zinniker – Part 1," *Applied Biodynamics* 32 (2001): 6.
- 2) Hartmut von Jeetze, "The Four Ethers in Their Relation to Agriculture," *BIODYNAMICS* 236 (2001): 9–14.
- 3) ———, "What You Can Learn From Your Horse," *BIODYNAMICS* 226 (1999): 22–27.
- 4) ———, "The Garments of the Farm Individuality," *BIODYNAMICS* 221 (1999): 8–13.

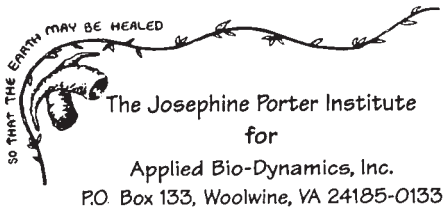
Nick Franceschelli was born and raised in New York City. After high school he worked on biodynamic dairy farms and at the Josephine Porter Institute. He now works for the educational program at the Hawthorne Valley Farm in New York State. Nick would love to hear from any reader who does not find the preceding interview one of the most worthwhile in the history of this periodical.

Biodynamic Seed Catalog

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“We go through the fields, and all of a sudden the knowledge is there in us. We know it absolutely. Afterwards we put it to the test and find it confirmed.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Agriculture* (Adams translation), Lecture Two, p. 52



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