

Applied BIODYNAMICS®



Winter, 2007–08

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Issue No. 59

Vortex Forms and Midwinter Spirals

John Blackwood

Those of us who work with the biodynamic preparations are familiar with the vortex, the hours we have spent stirring preparations, watching the water as it spirals round and round, back and forth . . . John Blackwood invites us to explore the geometry of the vortex and to contemplate the vortex as an expression and a working together of earthly and heavenly forces. Through this imagination, we can deepen our understanding of what the vortex represents, and realize the spiritual significance of this form found in nature.

General vortex

The vortex is an intriguing form. We see it everywhere, from emptying the kitchen sink, to palm trees, to spinning tornadoes, to NASA's observation of "sprites,"¹ to seashells. And they come in all sorts of shapes (Figs. 1 and 6). How are they generated, even from a merely geometric point of view, let alone the manifold forces that form them? And what has this to do with midwinter? Some of the ancient midwinter celebrations seemed to involve a working inwards towards a center and then a winding out, an awakening, from that deep and cold earth center as the sun began to take over again towards summer. What *forms* were these that moved inwards and outwards? We can think of

a *spiral* form as taking the light into this center and then leaving a magical trace as it winds out again. The ancients often pictured this archetypal double action.² But is it a relevant image today?

Two kinds of spirals

To be consistent with modern geometry we must think of the spiral, *not only in a plane, but in a point*. The universal principle of duality insists on this whether we like it or not. So what does a spiral *in a point* look like? We see this if we realize that a spiral in a plane is driven by the ordered *activity* of point and line, the planes are two active geometric elements. The two elements in a point, however, are plane and line so it must be *their* activity that creates our point spiral. A plot of both of these is shown in the accompanying diagram (Fig. 2). The point-wise spiral appears like a spiral cone *through* O' . Its other half (below O') is not shown nor is it shown above plane o .

How does this work? This perspective enlarges our concept of the spiral. For *both* these images – spiral in point and spiral in plane are two dimensional. We are interested here in the behavior of two elements in a static third, not

continued on page 3

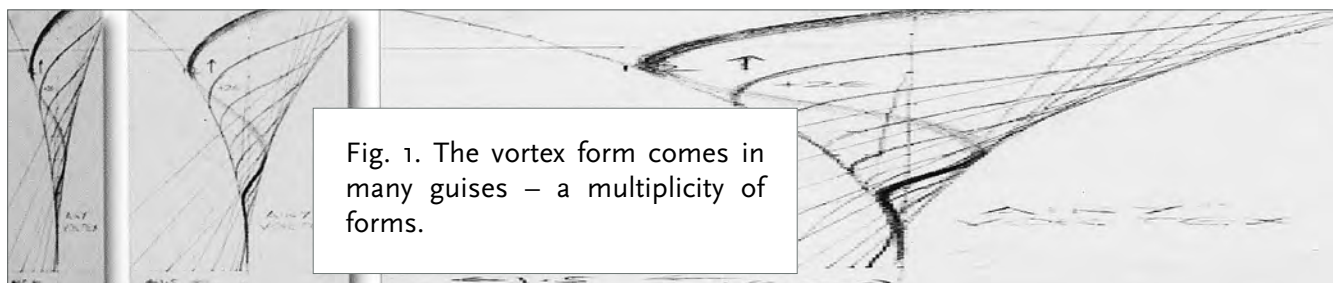


Fig. 1. The vortex form comes in many guises – a multiplicity of forms.

Notes

Dear Friends,

In keeping with the mood of winter, meditation and reflection are recurring themes in this issue. Both Nancy Poer, a founder of Rudolf Steiner College in California, and John Blackwood, a Waldorf high school teacher from Australia invite us to contemplate slaughter and the vortex, respectively. Hunter Francis generously prepared the memorial for Peter Dukich, a friend of biodynamics for decades. Also in this issue are more recent reflections on activities taking place at JPI. Other items of interest point to much liveliness and activity around biodynamics and the preparations work as we head into 2008.

I was pleased to see JPI receive international coverage in a two-part report by Monty Waldin that appeared in the prominent UK environmental magazine, *Ecologist* (September and October 2007). The articles profiled BD #500, and BD #501, in the context of the Fall 2006 JPI Preparation Making Workshop, which Waldin attended. In addition, articles on biodynamic wines appeared in recent issues of *Mother Jones* (November/December 2007), and *Fortune Small Business* (December 2007/January 2008). The trickle effect of this prominent media coverage is that more people who are new to biodynamics are finding their

way to JPI, wanting to learn about the biodynamic preparations, and how to use them. And then there are those of us that have been at it long enough to realize that working with the preparations offers a lifetime of study and contemplation – and that the sense of newness never fades.

Christy Korrow

Pfeiffer BD Field and Garden Spray

A New Name for the Pfeiffer BD Field Spray

It is widely known that the Pfeiffer BD Field Spray has been used on farms with much success. By spraying onto green manure crops, cover crops, stubble, crop residues, grass sods, etc., just before turning them under, the BD Field and Garden Spray aids in transforming the organic materials in the topsoil into humus.

Both as a soil and/or a foliar spray, this product also plays an important role for the gardener and landscaper. The BD Field and Garden Spray can be used in sheet composting and as a seed bath prior to planting to speed up and improve germination. As a foliar spray on growing plants, it can stimulate flowering and fruit set on crops such as tomatoes, peppers, or squash.

The BD Field and Garden Spray contains the biodynamic preparations BD #500, #502, #503, #504, #505, #506 and #507, which give the product its unique effectiveness.

Applied Biodynamics

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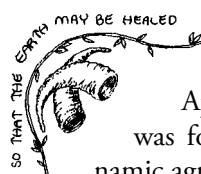
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Mission

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

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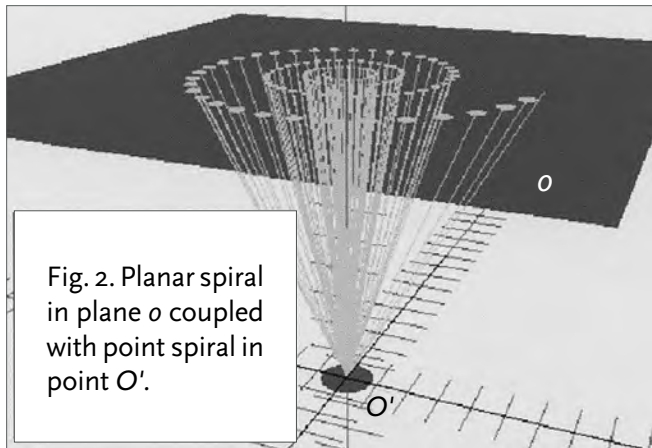
It stimulates the proliferation of soil bacteria and enzymes, helping to accelerate the breakdown in organic matter without tying down nitrogen or other delaying actions.

Contact JPI to purchase and for details on suggested application rates for both farm- and garden-scale use.

continued from page 1

Vortex Forms and Midwinter Spirals

three elements. In the real world of our cognition (the unity of percept and concept) both spirals are as important as each other.



Plane and point spirals combined in space

When these two activities are combined in the space of three dimensions (see Fig. 2 again), then the spiral design of the seashell can arise (see Fig. 3). When combined in such a way that the spiral in the plane is *different* to the spiral in the point, then the combined activity in space can give the vortex form! *The vortex is the principal form that lives between plane and point.*

Vortex form, a link between cosmos and earth

We then have the *form* which links heaven and earth if the plane (at infinity, or “heaven,” cosmos, zodiac, etc.) is far enough from the Earth as center point. Figure 4 attempts to show how this vortex architecture is the inevitable *form* that arises from the combined movement, between point and plane, of a primal geometric entity, a point/line/plane

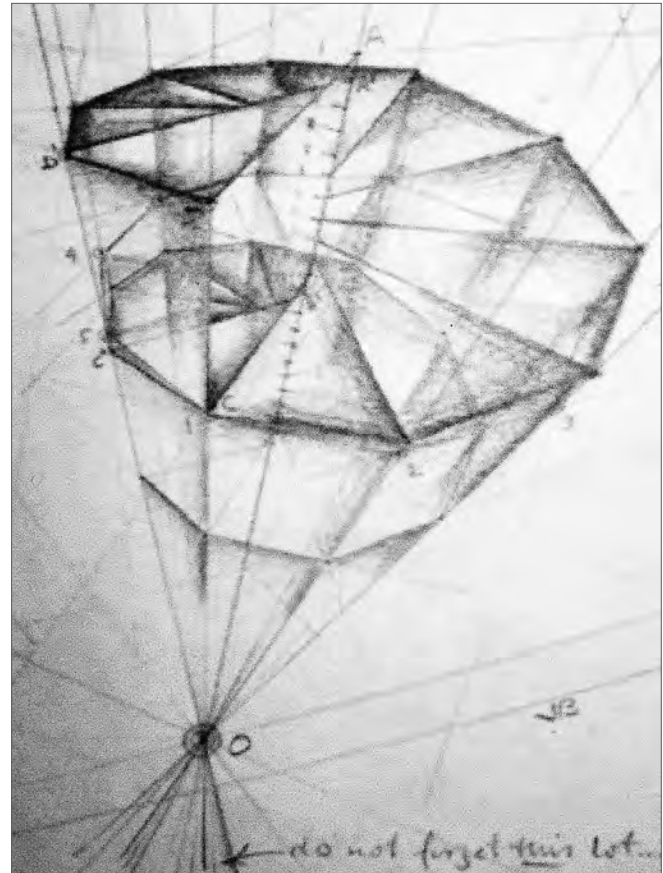


Fig. 3. Double cone

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*)

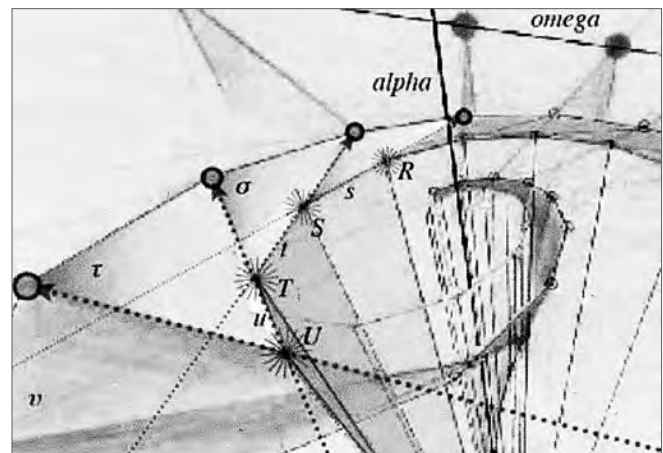


Fig. 4. Plotting a point/line/plane triples movement in space.

triple. And it works. Even a computer can be made to plot this kind of vortex!

A slice of the cosmos?

Perhaps our midwinter spiral is something of a picture (which we can walk on the earth's surface) of this connection of the earthly center and the plane of heaven, a kind of section (Fig. 5) or a tiny slice of a grand activity weaving between these two extremes?

Notes

- 1) Massive but weak luminous flashes that shoot upward, directly above an active thunderstorm system and are "rocket-like" or conical in shape.
- 2) The zodiacal symbol for Cancer is a daily reminder of these opposing forces at play.

John Blackwood teaches senior high school math at Glenaeon Waldorf School in Sydney, Australia. He can be contacted at 93 Warrane Road, Willoughby, Sydney, Australia.

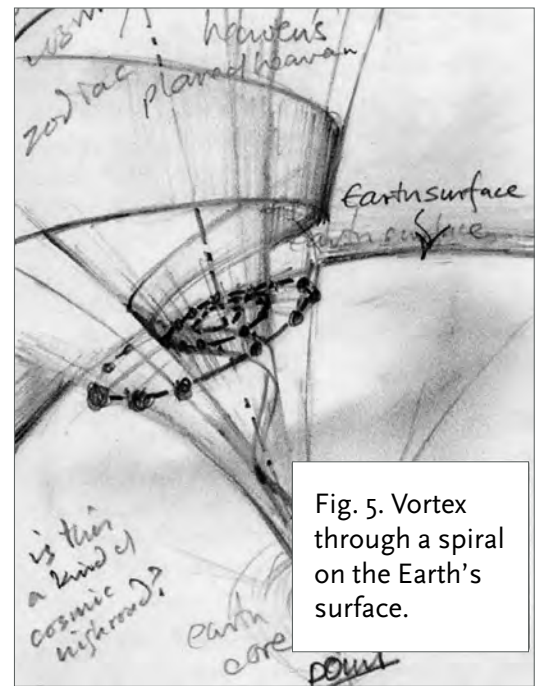


Fig. 5. Vortex through a spiral on the Earth's surface.



Fig. 6. Additional vortical forms: Water vortex, palm branches, "tornado" sketch, seashell.

Meditative Thoughts for a Beef Animal Before Slaughter for Meat and Biodynamic Preparations

Nancy Jewel Poer

Here we meet, bovine creature, I, human, and you, animal. Some years past, I made a decision to bring a bull and cow together, and by the higher creative power of the universe, you came into being. You have been nourished by your mother's pure milk for a long and natural cycle. You've gamboled, run, butted, bawled, ruminated, defecated, hungered and rested. You have experienced it all: rain, cold, summer's heat and flies, spring's sweet dew-covered clover. You stand at the apex of your development. Only aging and death lie ahead. For you pain can only be endured, for you can only rise as far as the wondrous and intricate instincts that govern your responses to life.

On the other hand, I, as a human, am given the possibility, and responsibility of transforming pain and suffering

into knowledge and capacities for soul growth. I am able to choose joy and love, to reach for the spirit and a higher consciousness in this life and beyond.

By my decision, you will die. Your life will be sacrificed. My part in this is serious. Your body will become blood, marrow and sinew in my body. As you return to the great sheltering bovine soul of the cosmos, your substance will be scattered, given to many human beings to support their continuing existence.

You came from God. You give yourself to me. If I would stand honorably in the great scheme of things then I must give myself to God. It's the only bargain that makes sense. It's a hard one for a human, self-willed and ego-centric as we are, but if we don't strive for this, we become disruptive,

impeding snags in the deep flowing river of life. With your long lashed bovine eyes you challenge me to this bargain. Challenge me to use your gift to reach for full humanity as you are fully animal, challenge me to become a conscious, caring, transforming power, a center of light in the circle of life.

We will make biodynamic preparations with your body, placing oak bark into your head, into the triune cavity that held your small instinctive brain; oak bark rich in calcium to work in union with the calcium in your thick bony skull. Into your tough and flexible intestine we will pack sun-filled fragrant chamomile flowers. We will wrap sun yellow dandelions into your fluted, transparent mesentery. Placing light into the dark primal organs of life, above-below, macrocosm-microcosm, heaven-earth.

With *your* substance and *our* consciousness we create the sacred alchemy, an alchemy which cannot be done by nature or us alone. Together we create something. Together, human, animal, plant, soil and universe combine into substances that can heal the desecration of our earthly home. We can rest assured that where this enlivened compost goes, the Mother Earth is again made sacred.

Goodbye Quackgrass

Christy Korrow

Over the course of a season, a Michigan farmer eliminates a tenacious weed, and develops an appreciation for the Pfeiffer BD Field and Garden Spray.

When Sisyphus rolled his stone uphill in endless repetition, as Greek Mythology tells, he missed a far greater punishment, namely, weeding Quack Grass.

Ehrenfried E. Pfeiffer¹

For twenty years, Mike Richmond and his wife Mary Jayne have owned a forty-acre parcel in northern Michigan's Upper Peninsula, above Green Bay, Wisconsin. This part of the United States, located twenty-three miles from Lake Superior, is Zone 3, and can experience extreme temperatures of 34 degrees in late June and up to 60 inches of snow in April!

After retiring, the Richmond's decided to begin marketing some produce, with hope that the farm could give a little bit back. Their 100 foot by 200 foot garden patch had been tended organically for fifteen years by plowing in different cover crops each year and never using chemicals. (Richmond especially likes rye since it germinates quickly in the cold of an early northern Michigan spring.) But despite his efforts, quackgrass (*Agropyron repens*) was invasive and troublesome throughout the clay loam patch.

Dear animal, wily, stubborn, yet honest and holy, you do your part in dying. We are partners in this. I owe you and God. I stand before you with reverence and deepest thanks.



After reading about biodynamics for many years, Richmond decided the time had come to apply the BD Field and Garden Spray he'd purchased from JPI. "I woke up one morning and said, 'Today's going to be the day.'"

It was early June, and with enthusiasm, Richmond stirred a batch of BD Field and Garden Spray for 30 minutes. (The Pfeiffer Field and Garden Spray technically requires no stirring, since it is pre-potentized.) When the mixture clogged his sprayer,² he grabbed a new four-inch paint brush and spread the Field Spray by hand, in drop-lets, concentrating on one-half of his garden patch, covering all of the areas where there was quackgrass.

Richmond then disked the area and let it lie fallow. When he disked it again, two weeks later, he was shocked that he could put his hand into the soil right up to his wrist – that was a first. His next step was to sow rye, as a way to crowd out the quack grass, and that crop was disked down in late July.

Following that, he sowed Japanese millet, and by October it was knee-high. At that time, he applied another batch of the BD Field Spray and then disked. Two weeks later, the Japanese millet was completely gone, and Richmond says, "The soil was dark and gorgeous." The soil quality of the plots treated with the crop rotations and BD Field Spray

surpassed that of the neighboring plot he had been trying to build up for fifteen years.

One year later, Richmond is using the *Stella Natura* biodynamic planting calendar and has added BD #500 (horn manure) and #501 (horn silica) to his preparation application schedule.

The Richmond's summer gardens thrive, and are filled with sunflowers, corn, wheat, oats, amaranth, cauliflower, broccoli and peas, as well as tomatoes in three hoop houses, providing plenty of produce for the family and their thirteen CSA customers. Their four hives of honey bees are thriving. They have recently added sheep, rotating them from paddock to paddock. The best news: weeding only takes a few hours a week.

Notes

- 1) Ehrenfried E. Pfeiffer, *Weeds and What They Tell* (p. 90).
- 2) Avoid clogging the sprayer by using panty hose to strain the Pfeiffer Field Spray before pouring into the sprayer. Pfeiffer Field and Garden Spray will pass through a .35 inch or 35 mesh screen, but when used in many sprayers, must be strained through a 50 mesh screen to prevent clogging nozzles.

Pfeiffer on Quackgrass

"Quackgrass can be choked out by sowing soy beans, cow peas and millet, if the land was first thoroughly cultivated and the weather was hot and dry. Also two successive crops of rye will choke out quackgrass. . . ."

Of the grasses only a few are to be mentioned as more or less troublesome where not wanted: – in gardens and lawns. For all the creeping grasses: – Crab Grass (*Digitaria sanguinalis*), Quack Grass (*Agropyron repens*), hand-pulling on lawns before they form a mat, much and frequent cultivation in the gardens, and – much patience. . . ."

Ehrenfried E. Pfeiffer, *Weeds and What They Tell* (pp. 26, 54 respectively). Available from JPI for \$9.95 plus shipping.

Evergreen Elm: Achieving Success With the Help of the Pfeiffer BD Field and Garden Spray

The Evergreen Elm biodynamic gardeners won big again in the August 2007 McKean County Fair competition. They won 24 first place blue ribbons, one third place white and two fourth place yellow ribbons out of 29 entries during the fair. Their Master Gardener, L.A. Rotheraine attributed their success this year to teamwork, hard work, and the Pfeiffer BD Field and Garden Spray. "Of the 24 blues," says Rotheraine, "the most important for all biodynamic and organic growers throughout the world is the first place taken in the cherry tomato competition. Our Selke Biodynamic Cherry Tomato has become the standard bearer against the genetic engineering and terminator seed companies. It cannot be duplicated by the technology these companies use. Only the biodynamic agricultural science as deployed by Evergreen Elm and our special method of producing tomato seeds can create this superior plant. One can picture all seeds as crystallized energy from different stars or groups of stars, each plant species an earthly replica of its heavenly source. It's important to remember, however, that the success of all our winning entries was assured through the use of the Field and Garden Spray and the unselfish efforts and

dedication of Evergreen Elm's gardening team and their rigorous adherence to chemical free growing methods."



Some members of Evergreen Elm's biodynamic gardening team pose for us at their garden location in Bradford, PA on August 24. Pictured from the left, holding their tools and ribbons are Jackie Wolfe, Robert Tubbs, Betty Bailey, Jim Oehler, Randy Johnson, Supervisor Brandi Buck, Lisa Williams holding Frankie the garden cat, and Patty Price. Photo courtesy Bradford Journal.

Gena Nonini Initiates University Course in Biodynamics

Hunter Francis

Some of the most fertile ground for the spread of biodynamics these days lies in the rolling hills of California's wine growing regions. Led by the Benziger family, Fetzer Vineyards, Paul Dolan and others, vintners throughout the state are noticing a marked improvement in the quality and flavor of their grapes when they introduce biodynamic practices. This phenomenon, in part, is stimulating an interest in biodynamics throughout the general agricultural community. It was therefore fitting when one of the largest agricultural colleges in the nation, and one of the most respected on the West Coast, Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo, California inaugurated a continuing education class in biodynamics this October. "Foundation for Applied Biodynamics," conceived and taught by JPI Board President Gena Nonini was successfully offered to twenty-five students for the first time on October 26–27, 2007 at Cal Poly. The course is the first in a two-part series to be held annually in the future, with one part taking place each fall and a complementary course each spring.

Ms. Nonini is well poised to educate others on the methods and benefits of biodynamic agriculture. Having received her B.S. in Agriculture Business Management from Cal Poly and M.S. in Agribusiness from Arizona State, she has biodynamically farmed grapes, almonds, citrus and row crops on her family's eighty-acre farm in Fresno, California for seventeen years. In addition to her role at JPI, Nonini is President of the Board of the newly formed Biodynamic

Trade Association, serves on the California Raisin Marketing Board, and is Secretary of the (Federal) Raisin Advisory Committee. Her success in production agriculture and deep knowledge of the biodynamic process helped her in gaining the respect of the diverse crowd present for the class in October. Growers involved in the production of coastal crops, vintners, a large-scale rice grower, landscapers, gardeners and Cal Poly students were all in attendance.

The "Foundation for Applied Biodynamics" class covered the basic principles and methods behind the successful application of biodynamics. It started with an introductory overview, which included the history of biodynamics, the concept of the "farm organism," Goethean thinking, the idea of "forces vs. substance," and certification. Course participants learned how to read the biodynamic calendar, and were given a hands-on demonstration at the Cal Poly Organic Farm on how to prepare two vital biodynamic preparations: BD #500 (horn manure) and Biodynamic Compound Preparation (the barrel compost recipe of M. Thun).



The springtime offering, entitled "Understanding Biodynamic Agriculture: Principles and Practice," will include an in-depth look at the four kingdoms in nature described by Rudolf Steiner, with special focus on how they are impacted by etheric and astral forces. The outdoor, hands-on activity for this class will teach class participants how to make BD #501 (horn silica) and a selection of the compost preparations. The class is scheduled to be held June 6–7, 2008 at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, CA.

For more information on Ms. Nonini's activities, visit her website at <www.marianfarmsbiodynamic.com>. To be placed on a mailing list for the Spring 2008 class, please contact Hunter Francis at (805)756-5086 or <wfrancis@calpoly.edu>.



Michaelmas Gathering at JPI Introduces Scouts to Biodynamics

Many hands made light work as Boy Scout Troup 244 and Girl Scout Troup 607, from Radford, Virginia, gathered to stuff over 1,200 cow horns at JPI. Each of the youngsters was awarded a patch/badge at the end of the day by JPI staff member, Mark Proctor (New Moon), in recognition that each of them had filled at least 100 horns. It is hoped that this will be the initial step for an eventual biodynamic merit badge.



Front row: Mark King, Jeff Smith, Mark Proctor, Gary Asmussen, Angel Price
Second row: Will King, Taylor Downey, Mason Byrd, Drew King, Alex Hill
Third row: Nikki King, Sam Lee, Judith Young, Andrew Beaman
Special thanks to Mark and Carolyn King for the photos.



Possibly the most important sector of society to share in the preparations work, the youth.



Mark Proctor (New Moon), JPI staff member, poses in the large pit that will hold over 1,000 cow horns filled with cow manure, to create BD #500 (horn manure). The horns will be buried all winter, and unearthed in spring.



Large tubs filled with stuffed horns line the edge of the pit.



Scouts look on with interest as JPI director Hugh Courtney, patiently demonstrates how to place the horns in the pit.



A Scout takes over, lining up the horns with care.



Patch awarded to participants who stuffed at least 100 horns.

JPI Open House – August 25, 2007

Visitors were invited to tour the farm, offices, root cellar, preparation making facilities and share in bluegrass music and refreshments. (Photos by Jason Martin.)



Attendees perused educational displays and literature tables.



Yarrow blossoms that were stuffed into stag bladders and wrapped in cheesecloth hang in the sun until fall, casting shadows on the JPI office windows. In autumn they will be buried for the winter, to be unearthed in spring as BD #502 (yarrow preparation).

In Memoriam: Peter Dukich (1915–2007)

Hunter Francis

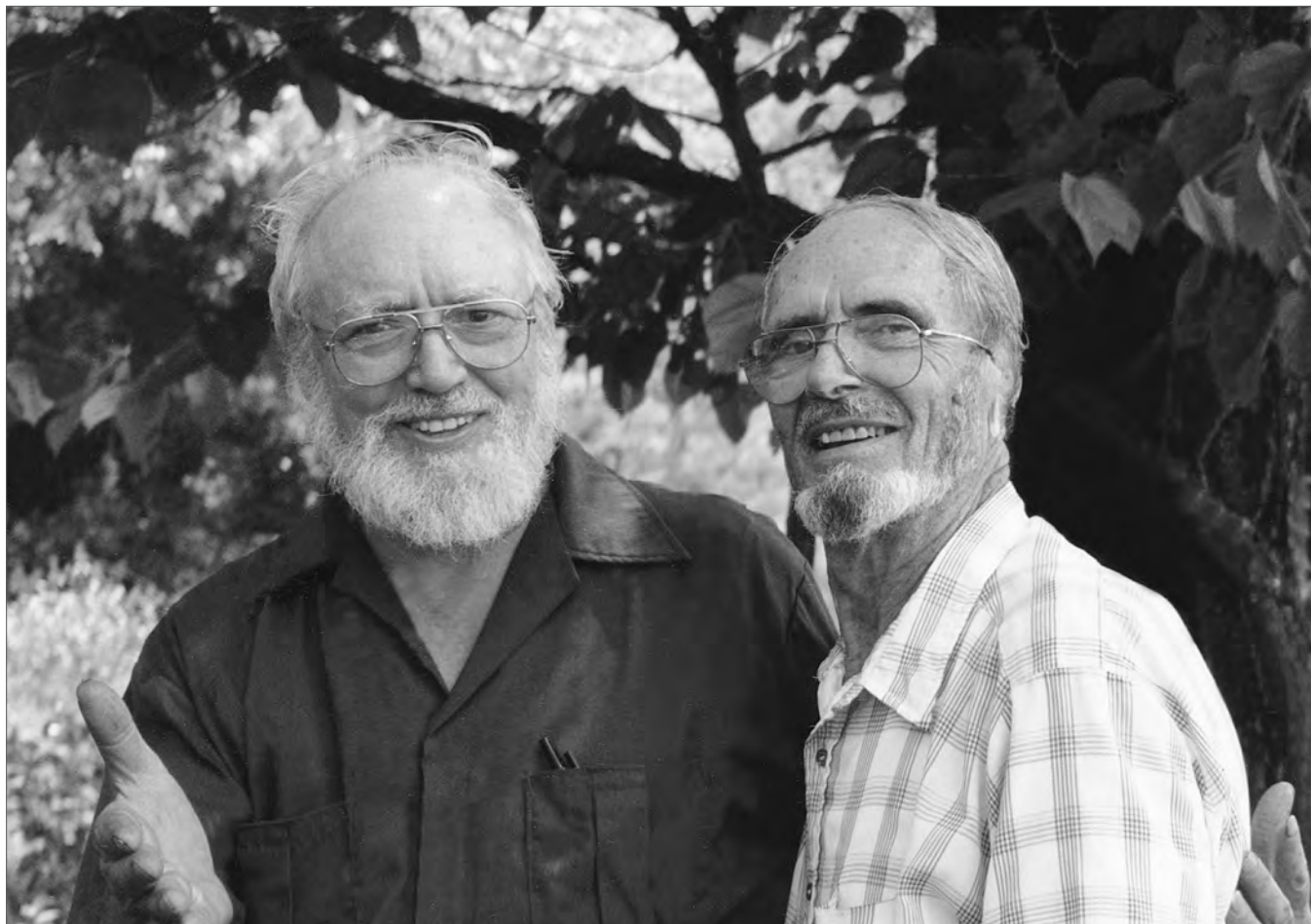
I first met Peter in 1997 while living in San Diego. I had responded to an advertisement for a “biodynamic study group.” This was my first exposure to biodynamics, something I knew very little about at the time other than that it had been initiated by Rudolf Steiner. When I arrived at Peter’s home, I was graciously greeted by his wife, Charlotte, and joined a group of about eight participants. Peter had selected and copied a passage for us to read together, from Alex Podolinsky if I recall correctly. I think we made it to the third paragraph, and that only after much time had passed.

Anyone who knew Peter will surely laugh at the last sentence. Peter was a man whose passion for biodynamics ran so deeply, so strongly, and at times so swiftly, that it was difficult to contain it by protocol (such as reading from a text). It seemed that each sentence, sometimes even a word, could unleash a cascade of information from Peter – often in the form of stories. Needless to say, I was enthralled by

Peter’s capacity to make the subject at hand come alive. He had a unique and unforgettable talent for helping one to see the connections of biodynamics to one’s life, to the earth, and to spirit.

I must have arrived by seven p.m. that night, but the group didn’t disperse until well after midnight. In between time, we had probed many worlds, including history, religion, agriculture and science. We ended by dancing to Peter’s voluminous collection of albums, with selections that covered many continents, musical genre, and decades. Remarkably, I have the feeling he could have gone on much longer, if the rest of us hadn’t tired so! He was 82 at the time.

It’s really no wonder that throughout Peter’s life he had inspired hundreds of people to pursue the study of anthroposophy in its many permutations. Having discovered anthroposophy at the early age of seventeen, Peter had the opportunity to be exposed to many of its facets. Coupled



Peter Dukich (right) with Hugh Courtney

with his enthusiasm, the knowledge he acquired over his lifetime made his teaching infectious. As a life-long gardener with a deep knowledge of agriculture, he was particularly inspiring to the farmers in his midst.

Peter was born as Peter Dudukovich in Johnstown, PA at midnight on May 19, 1915. His father was a Yugoslavian coalminer who relocated to Ohio twelve years later to work in a steel mill. Peter was the oldest of twelve children. Early in his life, he was active in the Serbian Orthodox church, where he sang in the choir. This was the start of a life-long love for music. Peter was first introduced to anthroposophy by the priest serving in the church. In order to help his family, Peter left high school before graduating to work in the steel mill. Later, he went on to work in the ship building industry on Lake Erie and as a carpenter building houses.

Peter married at 22 in 1937 and had three sons by his first wife, Mildred, who was also part of the Serbian community that Peter was active in. Tragically, Mildred died in 1960 of uterine cancer. It was through this trial that Peter drew nearer to the Scharf family of New York State, whom he had met through anthroposophy and whose son Paul was later to found the Threefold Fellowship Community in Spring Valley. Peter traveled to New York in that year to help with construction projects for the Scharf's and it was there that he met his second wife, his beloved Charlotte. They married in 1961, and the couple moved back to Ohio. Eventually, they had three daughters together.

In 1962, the family moved back to Copake, N.Y. to work in a newly founded Camphill Village. They stayed until 1969, when they relocated to Detroit so that Charlotte could attend Waldorf teacher training. Two years later, they moved to California to teach at the Highland Hall Waldorf School in Northridge. While Charlotte instructed kindergarten, Peter conducted gardening and woodworking classes. He also taught at Pierce College, and gave innumerable biodynamic agriculture courses and classes, both here and abroad. In 2006, after having lived and taught throughout Southern California, Peter retired in San Diego County's beautiful Pauma Valley on the Tierra Miguel farm, which he had helped found. There, Peter and Charlotte became an integral part of the young farm's growth. [For more information on the exciting initiatives taking place at Tierra Miguel, please see the next issue of *Applied Biodynamics*.]

I last saw Peter at Tierra Miguel in the spring of 2007. As always, I was welcomed by a firm handshake and an open heart. Together, we inspected the many bottles of compost he had laboriously sifted by hand – “Peter's Powder”! Peter was very proud of his compost, and he liked to talk about

it. Doing so invariably provided him with the opportunity to speak about the transformative processes within which all life is immersed. A true agriculturist and a true anthroposophist, Peter was fascinated by the interplay of spirit and matter. And, he always seemed at ease with the immensity and the mystery of it all. He radiated a sense of belonging that warmed one's heart. How refreshing and delightful to have known someone who so deeply understood that the cosmos is our home! I will miss Peter and thank him for the many things he taught me about life.

A Note of Thanks

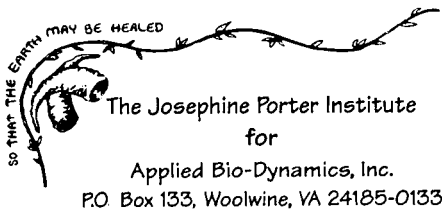
I just wanted to send a note of appreciation for the beautiful teaching resource you provide. I used your products for the first time this year on my small suburban yard, and also bought two Tree Harmonizer Kits, one of which I placed around the last large maple on my 1/16 acre lot. In the nine years I've lived here, this tree (which has another neighbor's driveway on one side) has gone into the fall season with leaves that go from green to brown. This year for the first time, the leaves are a beautiful yellow tipped with red. I feel like a lovely miracle of health is unfolding before my eyes.

So thank you for providing the time, the learning, the inspiration for me to learn more and continue along this healing path.

Mary V. Maruca
Arlington, VA

“If you sow close to winter, you induce a strong reproductive capacity; if you sow further away from winter, you engender a strong nutritive force in your grains.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, p. 80



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