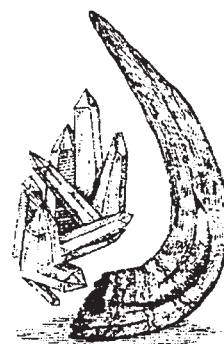


Applied BIODYNAMICS®



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Issue No. 73

Biodynamics in the Breadbasket: An Interview with Fred Kirschenmann

Hunter Francis

*Frederick L. Kirschenmann, PhD is one of today's leading thinkers in the realm of sustainable agriculture. Having grown up on his family's farm in North Dakota, having served for many years as an educator in the fields of philosophy and religion, and having provided leadership in the contemporary organic and biodynamic movements, Kirschenmann offers unique perspectives on the challenges agriculture faces today. Eloquent essays elaborating on these perspectives are compiled in his most recent book, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*. Currently, he continues to manage his farm, one of the largest certified biodynamic farms in the U.S. He is a distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Ames, Iowa, and president of the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills, New York. It was both my pleasure and privilege to have been able to speak with him about his experience with biodynamics in March, 2011.*

HF: Fred, can you tell us about your farm today?

FK: Well, we've actually started to shrink the farm in the past year, thinking we could make it a little better. The decision was made in part because we had the opportunity to buy some land that we had been renting and farming biodynamically for the past thirty years that was contiguous, whereas we had some three quarter sections that were not contiguous. So, we sold the non-contiguous sections and that reduced the size of the farm a bit. I also did this rather deliberately because if you are really going to operate the farm as an organism, which Steiner suggested and which I firmly believe in, then it's much easier to do if the land is all contiguous.

HF: So, that now gives you a total of how much acreage?

FK: We're at about 2,600 acres now. We were at about 3,500. Approximately a thousand acres of the current



property is still in native prairie, which we use for grazing of livestock. The rest is used as cropland, which is all certified Biodynamic and organic. The native prairie is just certified organic. The reason for that decision reflects my feeling about the prairie as a perfect ecosystem. It has a lot of rocks in it and is pretty much what the glacier left ten thousand years ago. Putting the preparations on that land just didn't seem that compelling to me and would require

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Editor's Note

In our last issue, Philip and Laura Lyvers told readers all about the methods and practices employed on their 2,600 acre Kentucky farm. We now have another interview with a large-scale producer. I imagine most readers and members of the biodynamic community will be familiar with the name of Fred Kirschenmann and Kirschenmann Family Farms. Our issue editor and interviewer, Hunter Francis, is the director of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences' Center for Sustainability at Cal Poly State University in California. As an academic professional with a focus in sustainable agriculture, Francis was honored to interview Kirschenmann, who has devoted himself to not only organic and biodynamic farming, but also to educating at the university level. Kirschenmann holds a doctorate in philosophy, and is a highly-respected voice of agricultural reason, proposing intellectually-sound and realistic alternatives to agribusiness. This is a unique interview in that Kirschenmann shares the details of his family farm management, biodynamic preparation usage, crop rotation, and specifics about how such a large farm is run biodynamically. Now that only 1½% of all Americans identify themselves as farmers, it is heartening to hear Kirschenmann mention that he is inspired by the young people who are embracing agriculture through various farm

internship programs and university-based farm education. JPI also offers a line-up of events where you can come and learn how to make various preparations. Visit www.jpibiodynamics.org to view the calendar.

We welcome Abigail (Abby) Porter to our newsletter staff as East Coast Editor. She will begin her duties as editor of the fall issue. In this issue, she reports on the Fellowship of the Preparation Maker's Conference, which this year was held in Ontario, Canada and focused on Biodynamic Compound Preparation (a.k.a. barrel compost). It is worth noting that Abby is the daughter of Josephine Porter, JPI's namesake, and as such, she was raised around biodynamic agriculture. She is still actively engaged in the biodynamic preparations work. For those interested in learning more about Josephine Porter, Issue No. 4 of *Applied Biodynamics* (Summer 1993) had a lengthy biography devoted to this important figure in biodynamics in the U.S. Back issues of the newsletter, as well as JPI biodynamic preparations and other publications, are now available for purchase online at www.jpibiodynamics.org!

Warm greetings,
Christy Korrow

Applied Biodynamics

Applied Biodynamics is a quarterly publication of the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI). The subscription price of \$30.00 per year helps support JPI research and development. Back issues are \$7.50 each.

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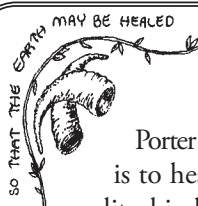
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JPI Executive Director Resigns

Shelley Goguen Hulbert has resigned as Executive Director effective May 6, 2011. Shelley is pursuing other opportunities in biodynamics. The Board appreciates the contributions that Shelley has made to JPI and wishes her well in her future work. She can be reached at sghulbert1@gmail.com or (603)547-7247.



Mission

The mission of the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics, Inc. is to heal the earth through production of quality biodynamic preparations based on the spiritual scientific discoveries of Rudolf Steiner and to advance education and research in biodynamic agriculture.

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Biodynamics in the Breadbasket: An Interview with Fred Kirschenmann

some very difficult maneuvering. So, we just decided to certify the prairie organic. All of the cropland is Demeter-Certified Biodynamic.

HF: *What do you mean by native prairie?*

FK: That just means it has never been disturbed by any agricultural practices. It has just been grazed, that's all.

HF: *On the cropland, what is the profile of the crops you grow?*

FK: It has changed over the years. We started our transition in 1976 to organic, then biodynamic in 1982. Of course, back then, there wasn't a lot of information available. I had actually started my career in education and it was a student of mine who introduced me to organic agriculture. When I came back to the farm, I decided to go organic. My student helped me a lot in terms of understanding crop rotations and so on, but he farms in Nebraska, so he couldn't help me in terms of the specific crops that would be appropriate because it's a different ecology there. We started with a simple rotation, but it quickly became clear that wasn't adequate. So, we started to experiment with different types of crops and different patterns of rotation. What we finally discovered was that it was important to alternate cool season and warm season crops. It controls weeds better. Second, alternating grassy plants and broadleaf plants helps to disrupt diseases. Alternating shallow- and deep-rooted crops helps with the nutrient profile in the soil. Of course, you also want to have a legume in the rotation to fix nitrogen. We experimented with different crops.

I've always said, once you have figured out a practical crop rotation that works for you, then the rest of farming organically or biodynamically comes pretty easily. From there, you can figure out your markets, etc. At one point,

we were raising about nine different crops. North Dakota, of course, is well-known for wheat. We have always had some hard red spring wheat and durum winter wheat in the rotation. We've also had winter rye, flax, buckwheat, millet, sunflowers, canola for a while, and alfalfa, which we use for forage for the livestock in the winter months. Yellow blossom sweet clover, which is a native of North Dakota, makes an excellent green manure cover crop.

Over the years, we've had to change that a bit. For example, when genetically-modified canola was introduced, we had to discontinue production because it's an insect-pollinated crop and there was no way to prevent contamination. We also had to discontinue the use of sunflowers, because they are a favorite food source of black birds common to our area. For a while, after the introduction of sunflower production here in the 1970s, it wasn't such a problem as long as a lot of farmers were growing sunflowers. However, more recently, faster maturing varieties of corn and soybeans were introduced and farmers have switched to them, partly because they receive better subsidies than wheat and sunflowers. Being the only farmer left raising sunflowers didn't work. All the black birds were left in my field! We had to give it up. So, we're now down to about six crops. We're still raising both varieties of wheat, rye, flax, buckwheat, millet and alfalfa.

...when genetically-modified canola was introduced, we had to discontinue production because it's an insect-pollinated crop and there was no way to prevent contamination.

HF: *How do you actually rotate those crops in terms of timing?*

FK: It varies, but the following are typical crop rotation sequences we have used on our farm:

- Year 1: Yellow blossom sweet clover is incorporated into the soil for green manure. Composted livestock manure is added in the fall. A year is devoted to restoring soil health. The clover also serves as an emergency source of forage for winter livestock feed during drought periods.
- Year 2: Hard red spring wheat, a cool season grassy crop.
- Year 3: Winter rye, a wintertime grassy crop with allelopathic effects to suppress weeds.
- Year 4: Sunflowers, a deep-rooted, broadleaf, warm season crop. Sweet clover is interseeded during the last cultivation.
- Year 5: Return to Year 1.

Or...

- Year 1: Alfalfa. We generally leave a field in alfalfa for three to four years, harvesting the forage each year for

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*)



The Kirschenmann farm is in the prairie pothole region of the high plains. Natural wetlands are an integral part of the farm.

winter feed for animals. It will accumulate nitrogen in the soil and protect soil from erosion. The second cutting of alfalfa is incorporated into the soil in the summer of the final year, and composted livestock manure is added.

- Year 2: Flax, a cool season broadleaf crop.
 - Year 3: Durum wheat, a grassy crop.
 - Year 4: Buckwheat, a broadleaf warm season crop. Clover is interseeded.
 - Year 5: Yellow blossom sweet clover is incorporated for green manure, and composted livestock manure is added.
- Oats or barley is sometimes seeded in place of winter rye; millet can replace buckwheat as a warm season crop. We have generally grown eight or nine different crops in various rotation schemes in a given year. All of the crops we grow are relatively quick to mature and work well in our short growing season.

HF: *And what about the livestock?*

FK: Our principle herd is a cow/calf operation. Over the years, we've had some pigs, sheep, chickens, and ducks, but it gravitated to the cow/calf operation. Right now, we have a young family on the farm that has been with us for about twenty years. They're basically running the day-to-

day operations for me. They have five kids. They all love animals, so we now are raising horses, donkeys and chickens, and they're considering bringing some sheep back into the operation.

HF: *So, in 1982, you started to incorporate biodynamics. What's the history of how you became interested in biodynamics?*

FK: Well, when we started to transition to organics in 1976, I didn't even know there was such a thing as an organic market. I did it entirely because I was so intrigued about what my student had shown me about what could happen with the quality of the soil under organic management. Gradually, I found out about certification and markets. There was an individual on the East Coast who was an advocate of biodynamics named Michael Marcola, who had started a company called the Mercantile Food Company, which exported organic and biodynamic crops to Europe. Michael called me one day looking for some organic spring wheat that was certifiable organic. He eventually flew out to our farm to check out our wheat. He bought some from us at a fifty cent per bushel premium. As it turns out, my wife's family lives in Connecticut about sixty miles from where Michael lives, so one holiday when we were visiting her family, I called Michael to see if I could visit him to find

out more about his markets. We had lunch and he really helped me understand the world of the organic market in Europe. As we were walking back to his office, he said, “Now, if you really want to be attractive to the market in Europe, you should go biodynamic.” I had actually heard about biodynamics from my former student, who had given me a copy of Rudolf Steiner’s book, *Agriculture*. At the time, I was still enough of a Cartesian thinker that I wasn’t that receptive to it.¹ Nevertheless, there was something about it that I sensed was important, so I told my student that someday I would go back and reread the book. Anyhow, as we got back to Michael’s office, I asked him what biodynamics was. He handed me a copy of the *Agriculture* book and said, “Well, here is where you start.” I guessed it was time for me to reread the book! So, I took the book back home with me. This time when I read it, now having understood many of the dynamics involved in organic agriculture, I began to understand for the first time what Steiner was getting at in the lectures. It started to make sense to me. I called Michael back and told him that it was very interesting, but that I would need some help transitioning the farm. He said, “Absolutely,” and put me in touch with Bob Steffen in Nebraska, who was knowledgeable about biodynamics. Bob came up to our farm and spent a week with me. He was the one who taught me how to make good compost. Bob also built a stirring machine for the farm and that’s how I got into biodynamics.

...I asked him what biodynamics was. He handed me a copy of the Agriculture book and said, “Well, here is where you start.”

HF: Was Bob Steffen a biodynamic farmer?

FK: Yes. He had a small farm of his own, but he was also the farm manager for Boy’s Town in Nebraska, which he managed with biodynamic principles.

HF: Did you end up adopting biodynamics cold turkey?

FK: From organic to biodynamic, yes. Getting into organic, we went through a process, just transitioning as much as we could risk at any one time. The first year, we put about a third of the acreage into organic and it went well. Afterwards, we realized that the reason it went well is because it was a good year with a warm spring. We probably also had some fertilizer left in the field from the previous conventional operation. Anyhow, there was virtually no difference in growth in the organic acreage, so it made me pretty confident. The next year, I put the whole farm into organic. That was a big mistake. We had a cold spring that

year. Nitrogen was tied up. We had weed problems and we suffered some severe losses in crop yield. Nonetheless, I didn’t want to go back to conventional, so we planted a lot of alfalfa the next year to build fertility. After that, we started to get serious about a more complex rotation. It took us about five years to operate well organically.

HF: So the transition to biodynamic was easier?

FK: Yes. By that time, we had the crop rotation figured out. It was primarily a matter of paying more attention to the principles of the farm as an organism and thinking about it in those terms. And, of course, adding the preparations to the operation.

HF: *My understanding is that you purchase all of the preparations used on the farm. Is that correct?*

FK: Yes, we are. At one point, there were about five other farmers in North Dakota, who said they were going to go biodynamic. One of the things I had encouraged us to think about was the idea of getting together at the end of the year, maybe along with a social event, and making all of the preparations together. Everybody seemed pretty excited about that, but as it turned out a few of them never ended up becoming biodynamic and one transitioned out of biodynamics because of family changes on their farm. The idea never materialized. At the same time, in exploring biodynamics further, I came to know Hugh Courtney at JPI, and realized they were doing a lot of work there training students. So, I came to two thoughts regarding the preps. One is that I wanted to support the work at JPI. Secondly, labor has always been the stress point for us and making the preparations meant more involvement of labor. Yet, I did want to know if we could do it given the particularly cold winter in North Dakota. So, Walter Goldstein spent some time with us and we made some horn manure (BD #500) preparation one winter. We buried the preparations into the ground and then put stacked hay bales over the area where we buried them. They turned out fine, so we knew we could do it. But at the same time, we have the labor issue and I do feel good about supporting JPI.

HF: Who is Walter Goldstein?

FK: He is a biodynamic researcher at the Michael Fields Institute in Wisconsin. He has actually done research on our farm and has been a very important mentor for us.

HF: *Given what you know about how other biodynamic farmers are using the preparations, along with recommendations given by JPI, would you say you use a standard regime regarding the preparations?*

FK: I think so. At the time we started to farm biodynamically, there wasn’t a biodynamic certification organization in the United States that was recognized in Europe. So, when we started to produce biodynamically, Michael Marcola



Fred Kirschenmann exhibits his air seeder during a Demeter certification inspection.

arranged for someone from the Netherlands to visit our farm. I can't remember his name. He had an interesting view not only of the preparations but of compost. He suggested that because of the good quality of our compost, we might not need to use as much as we had been. So, we did some experimentation. We tried putting 3 tons per acre on one area and our usual 6 tons per acre on another. We really didn't see much difference in the results. He also said that he didn't think the silica preparation (BD #501) was a big need for us in North Dakota because we have such long days here in the summertime. Given all of that energy from the sun, he didn't think the silica provided much advantage.

One of the other things that happened at that time is that I read the work of Alex Podilinsky of Australia, who suggested that you never want to use silica under drought conditions. This was in 1988, when we had a pretty severe drought in the Dakotas. I called Walter and asked him what he thought. He said he wasn't sure, but that we should do some research to find out. He came out the next summer, which was still in drought conditions, though not as severe. We decided to do a trial in our millet. I had Walter work with one of our workers to make the applications so I wouldn't know which was which. They divided a field into strips, applying one application of silica on one strip, two

on another, and none on a third. I did the combining, and kept the harvests separate. We took samples and assessed the yields. There was virtually no difference in yield and Walter couldn't find any significant difference in the quality characteristics. What that said to me was that, at least in North Dakota, drought is not something you have to be concerned with as a negative factor when using the silica. But it also raised the question as to whether this individual from the Netherlands was right that there really aren't any advantages to using it. But I never followed through with the question. I've just continued to use the silica.

HF: *Have you done any research on horn manure (BD #500)?*

FK: We haven't had a chance to do any controlled research, but our soil has continued to improve, so I assume the horn manure has been a positive factor. Walter Goldstein did do some research with a friend of mine, David Poddal, who farms about sixty miles south of us. David is very interested in all sorts of ecological approaches but had a hard time believing that the minute amount of preparations used in biodynamics could have an impact. That was a challenge for Walter! They did a trial with millet, again with three different controls. One was straight organic, one was organic with compost, and the other was organic with compost along with the biodynamic preparations, including the BD #500. They decided they would look at

the size of the root crown of the millet plant, assuming that would be a good indicator as to whether the preparations were having an effect. They found that the root crowns of the plants where the preparations were used were almost twice in size as the plants from the other two plots. David was still skeptical, so they did it another year and got exactly the same results.

HF: *So, you use BD #500 and 501, along with the compost preparations. How about the BD #508, Equisetum arvense? Are you using that?*

FK: We aren't using that now, no. I have had conversations with Hugh Courtney about that, in which he was pretty convincing, but as it stands, we just haven't gotten to using it.

HF: *Do you use barrel compost?*

FK: We use barrel compost in our BD #500 preparation mix on fields that are too far from the farm to regularly apply compost. Normally, we apply three tons of regular compost per acre.

HF: *Is there anything unique about biodynamics that has become particularly meaningful to you?*

FK: At this stage in my life, as I look towards the things that will likely be happening in the next few decades, to me, the most powerful thing about biodynamics are the principles of nature that Rudolf Steiner articulated. If you think about the future that we're moving into, and the fact that modern farming is entirely dependent on cheap energy, Steiner's view of the farm as an organism becomes even more important. We have been able to make agriculture work with a relative abundance of fertilizers and cheap oil, but as those resources become scarcer, the idea of self-reliance (which Steiner said was a reflection of a farmer's skill) takes on more urgency. Ann Clark at the University of Guelph in Canada just published an article on organic farming, in which she said that not only will the future of farming have to be organic, but it will have to be even more organic than what we have now – i.e., relying more on the ecological dynamics that are at the core of organic agriculture. I'm not sure if she is acquainted with biodynamics, but to me this is the heart of what is so important. In my reading of Steiner, these systemic approaches, specifically the idea of the farm organism, is heart and soul of biodynamics. That's what I'm most excited about in Steiner's work.

HF: *Given what you feel the future holds, do you see this as a new opportunity for biodynamics?*

FK: Absolutely. Again, I think the idea of the farm organism is vital. I also think this is something that people can relate to, at least people who are open to ecological approaches. The idea of the preparations is harder for people to grasp. I personally think that in sharing biodynamics with others,

it's best to start with these general principles, such as paying attention to the inner workings of nature, the farm organism, etc. People get excited about that. Then you can talk about the preparations and explain how they enhance the process. The other thing we have to do is get more serious about marketing. In the past, I think there was some reluctance in doing this, but it is important to get the message out. I think that's changing, especially with the success of the biodynamic wines. People recognize the superior quality of biodynamic wines, and this provides a chance to tell the wider story, which includes food.

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HF: *In your work, you talk a lot about the need to shift from our current mechanistic, reductionist world view. Inherent in that view, is a heavy focus on "quantities," hence our propensity towards materialism. How can we start to develop a better appreciation for "quality"?*

FK: What you are describing is a cultural shift that we have to make in our consciousness. Of course, that's always difficult and unfortunately takes time. One of the things that I find inspiring now is the next generation of young people emerging all across the country that is interested in farming. I do a lot of work now with the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in New York. I work with young people there and what I'm finding is that the next generation of young people is very rapidly moving beyond this reductionist perspective you mention. They know it doesn't work and they're not interested in just producing commodities. They want to have quality human relationships through agriculture as well. So, I think there are some real dynamics here that can bring out that cultural shift and the youth are a big part of them.

HF: *Would you include the recent "food movement" in this shift?*

FK: Absolutely. There is definitely a food revolution taking place. A few years ago you couldn't have imagined a book like Michael Pollan's being on the best seller's list for years.

HF: *What's art's role in all of this?*

FK: I've been saying for a long time that we need to marry

agriculture and the arts. It's absolutely critical now. We should understand that people are not going to make major transitions unless they can imagine something better than what they have currently. There is a lot of evidence that the quality of life in this country has actually deteriorated quite a bit since about 1950. So, I think it's a good time to use the arts to help people imagine a better life than we have now. You may be aware Deborah Koons Garcia is working on a documentary called *A Symphony of Soil*. Anyone seeing that film will have to think about soil as

more than dirt. I think that if we can get people thinking differently about soil, then we are a long way down the road in facilitating this shift in agriculture.

HF: *Thank you, Fred.*

Note

1. Cartesian thinking, or Cartesian materialism refers to the idea that consciousness is "realized in the physical materials of the brain." (O'Brien and Opie, 1999)

A Heart-Warming Gathering in the Cold of Winter

Abigail Porter

This year, the 10th annual Fellowship of Preparation Makers Conference was held March 4 to 6 in Canada – snowy, chilly Kincardine, Ontario. It seems like only a few years ago that I was invited to the first meeting of the Future of the Biodynamic Preparations Conference as it was then called. Finally, last year, my schedule permitted me to attend the 9th Conference held at JPI. I learned so much about the history, the medicinal and biodynamic uses of *Equisetum arvense* and met such an exciting new (for me) biodynamic community that I was motivated to continue attending these meetings.

I had a wonderful time at the Canadian conference, seeing old friends, meeting new ones, and renewing acquaintance with people like Charlotte Chambers (Golden Elm Farm, Ontario) whom I have not seen in over forty years (can it be so long?). I still have a clear image of her mother, Dorothy Chambers, and remember her as a friend of my mother, Josephine Porter. The conference felt like "coming home" to me.

Ferdinand Vondruska (BD Research Centre and C-Dar Lodge Farm, British Columbia), Lloyd Nelson (Hawaii), Dewane Morgan (Midheaven Farm, Minnesota), Ulrich Hack (president of Demeter Canada and part of the Ontario group), and Hugh Courtney all gave moving presentations, with Hugh stressing the need for the use of the silica preparations BD #501 (horn silica) and BD #508 (*Equisetum arvense*) on the American continent. I felt fortunate to finally meet Dewane and connect a face to the name that I addressed copies of *Biodynamics* to so many years ago. It was exciting and encouraging to hear of all the work being done in many areas of Canada and the US as well as in Mexico, India, Russia and Africa. Many more people are making the preparations now and younger people are involved. I am sure my mother would be thrilled with all the productive activity.

I was especially impressed with the warmth and generosity of the Canadian community who truly welcomed

us. There were so many aspects that made this conference both fun and enjoyable – the variety of the format, the information shared, the hands-on activities, the sharing of experiences, the music, the live BD gnome puppet show, the singing and dancing, *and* the delicious food provided by the community. What a sight it was to see seven- and seventy-year-olds lunging for the last seat while playing musical chairs. It has been a while since I laughed so much. I have to add "therapeutic" as an additional benefit of this event.

The integration of the cultural, spiritual and practical made this conference a most nourishing experience. Coming back to my hometown "reality" after the conference, I realized how segmented most people's lives are, and how that contributes to their lack of connection to each other and nature, and to their inability to see everything as interconnected. The contrast in feeling for me was very palpable.

How appropriate it was that Biodynamic Compound Preparation (a.k.a. BC, barrel compost) was featured and shared at this conference in light of the nuclear accident in Japan! The angels sure do work in mysterious ways. I sprayed BC out on March 20 at my place and at a friend's, who grows for local restaurants. I plan to spray it out once a month to mitigate any effects from radioactive fallout that may continue for some time.

I am so very grateful for Hugh Courtney's courage in accepting the challenge of the biodynamic preparations work when my mother passed on. A few days before her passing, in 1984, I had asked her if she expected Hugh to continue her work with the preparations. "Yes," she responded, "I think he will." When I notified Hugh of her passing and told him what she had said, he replied that he didn't feel quite prepared yet. Just the same, ready or not, he bravely agreed and has proven to be exceptionally diligent in carrying on the preparations work.

Hugh Courtney has been able to accomplish what my mother had only hoped for – the spread of the knowledge and skills of preparation making and biodynamic agriculture through his presence and presentations at a variety of ecological conferences over the past twenty-five-plus years, and the intensive hands-on workshops at JPI. I have often wondered, if Steiner were alive today, what would he be recommending? What new preps would he include? Not only has Hugh continued making the preparations and the Pfeiffer products so they are accessible to growers who cannot or will not make them for themselves, he has also expanded the use of the Maria Thun and Hugo Erbe preparations. Further, he has experimented with new uses for the preparations, collectively and individually, an area which has great potential.

At the conference, after hearing that Wali Via had an acre of nettle (my favorite preparation plant except when the dandelions are blooming) and feeling how lucky he is, I am inspired to plant more of the preparation plants at home and to make a few of the preparations again after a many year “sabbatical.”

I cannot go to a conference without bringing back some reading material, so I picked up some copies of *Stir*, the newsletter of the Society for Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening in Ontario, to learn more about our neighbors to the north.¹ I have to say, I have been “a-stir” as I read through the four issues that I brought home. I appreciate the Steiner quotes that are integrated into the articles, the poetry, the variety of articles, and I love the humor that editor Mark Ross imparts. I laughed out loud when I read his “Hibernate or Hiberniate?” article in Spring 2009 issue. It was either the work of a bear coming out of hibernation or a man with cabin fever touched by Shakespearean wordplay. I wonder if Canadians, in general, might have a higher humor quotient than those of us on the southern side of our border.

THANK YOU to everyone who helped organize, who presented and attended this enjoyable and inspiring conference. A special thanks to Uli and Martha, Elke and Martin and their families and their community for creating a most memorable event.

I am already looking forward to the conference in Colorado next year. I encourage your attendance.

Abigail Porter

Abigail's exposure to biodynamics started in 1954, a few weeks after birth, attending her first biodynamic conference at the Fetzer Farm (New Hope, Pennsylvania) with her mother, Josephine Porter. She started helping her mother make the preparations three to four years later

when Josephine took over Evelyn Spieden's job as preparation maker and secretary/treasurer of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association. Abby has fond memories Dr. Pfeiffer, Margaret Selke, Peter Escher, and other early biodynamic people in the Spring Valley community. Abby attended Natural Food and Farming Association and Biodynamic Conferences where her mother set up booths for biodynamic preparation and literature sales, laying the foundation for Abby's ongoing interest in nutritional and alternative healing modalities.

After over thirty years of designing, making and selling jewelry at Fine Craft shows and many galleries nationally, Abby is redirecting her energy to growing food and reconnecting to biodynamics. She lives in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, and has been volunteering with the Berkeley Springs Farmer's Market and the Local Economy Network to help herself and her community become more self-sufficient and resilient in these ever changing and challenging times.

Note

- 1) A subscription to *Stir* is a benefit of membership in the Society for Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening in Ontario. To learn more, visit www.biodynamics.on.ca.

Upcoming Events at JPI

Saturday, September 24, 2011 – 9:30 to 4:30:

Michaelmas Workshop at JPI: Making Horn Manure (BD #500) and Stinging Nettle (BD #504) Preparations

The cost of this workshop is \$75.00, with lunch included in the price.

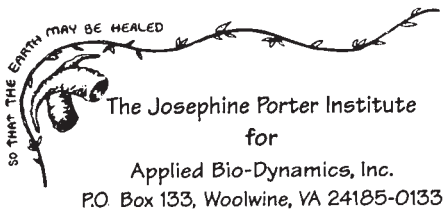
**Thursday, September 30 – Sunday, October 2, 2011:
Biodynamic Conference at Long Hungry Creek Farm,
Red Boiling Springs, TN**

JPI Booth and workshops for the public. For the latest information visit www.barefootfarmer.com.

Maria Thun originally developed her barrel compost as a remedy for radioactive pollution in the soil. This biodynamic preparation is sold through JPI as Biodynamic Compound Preparation (BC). JPI may be able to arrange for you and your gardening group to have your own workshop on your site with an instructor who has been through a JPI workshop on BC. To learn more about the origination of this preparation, please see *Results from the Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar*, by Maria Thun (Floris Books, 2003), which is out-of-print at this time.

“If we want to manage things properly in the various domains of agriculture, it is certainly necessary to have insight into the way substances and forces work, and also into the way spirit works.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, pg. 64



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