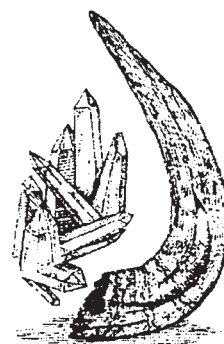


Applied BIODYNAMICS[®]



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Biodynamics in the Sacred Hoop: Enlivening Native American Soil through Buffalo

An Interview with Devon Strong by Hunter Francis

Since childhood, Devon Strong has lived his life in agriculture. From vegetable gardening to ranching to timber harvesting, he is well versed in a wide array of husbandry and land stewardship practices. His deep connection to the land and the cycles of nature led Devon to explore and adopt time-honored traditions of the Native American peoples, including their ceremonies involving agriculture. In 1991, Devon started his own operation, Four Eagles Farm, a biodynamic farm in the southern Oregon Rogue Valley, eventually moving it to a larger piece of land in Siskiyou County in northern California. Since 1997, he has been raising buffalo there, along with sheep and garden produce for the local community. As a biodynamic farmer, Devon has learned to make all of his own biodynamic preparations, which he uses on his farm and sells to the public. However, his preparations are unique in that they are made using buffalo manure, horns and other sheaths. The result is a powerful set of preparations that he believes is especially suited to agriculture on the North American continent. Through his work, Devon has found meaningful connections between anthroposophic (biodynamic) spiritual perspectives coming from Europe and those of the indigenous people of this continent. By strengthening and deepening these connections, he has found new ways to strengthen both the biodynamic and Native American communities. Located near Montague, California, Four Eagles Farm is now comprised of 220 acres surrounded by other ranchlands. In addition to selling bison and lamb meat products (felting, spinning, fleece, and pelts) drums, hides, and native crafts. Classes are also offered in home meat production (butchering, cut, and wrap classes), seed saving, and biodynamic preparation making. Off the farm, Devon continues



Devon Strong feeding buffalo (All photos courtesy of Devon Strong)

to offer sheep shearing and farrier services, something he has done since youth.

HF: Tell me about Four Eagles Farm. How did it get its name?

DS: A friend of mine had a farm in southern Oregon. I was going to do a nursery business with him. I started a bunch of herbal starts that winter with the intention of setting up a greenhouse at his place that spring. When I took my first truckload over to his place, just as I set the first flat of herbs on the ground, an eagle came over and circled overhead. He must have smelled the herbs. When I looked up, there were three more eagles in that thermal, so there were four eagles. So, I thought Four Eagles was a fitting name.

HF: So you started on a friend's property?

DS: Yes. I've moved four times since then, but kept the

continued on page 3

From the JPI Board President

Dear Friends of JPI:

Some of you may have already heard, but others not, so let me share with you good news about the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics. We have moved to a new home in Floyd, Virginia, just twelve miles north of our former home, which is close enough so that our wonderful staff will continue with us. With this move, JPI is now in a position to continue producing quality biodynamic preparations and providing a center of learning for biodynamics. We have two new locations in Floyd, Virginia. Our office is at The Village Green, in downtown Floyd, and our farm is nearby.

The weather in Virginia has been unseasonably wet, however we successfully removed and reburied the preparations at our Floyd farm site over a seven-day period. They are currently resting comfortably near a gorgeous stream that winds its way through the farm. JPI is grateful to Terry and Pat Brett who own the property. Many may know the Bretts as the founders and owners of Kimberton Whole Foods in Pennsylvania. Our neighbor to the east is Günther Hauk's Spikenard Farm, a biodynamic honeybee sanctuary, and to the south, Woody Crenshaw's Riverstone Organic Farm. We are delighted to join this community of likeminded people, who live and farm according to open-hearted and environ-

mentally sound practices. We already feel at home.

Our initial focus is getting settled into our new home. We are working on the spring preparations, BD #501, 502, and 507, and, in early summer, we will get the preparations that are currently in the ground out and processed. Due to the move, the board has decided not to have a formal fall workshop, however, we will be gathering in Floyd in late October to make preparations. If anyone is interested in joining us, please feel free to contact the JPI office at (540) 745-7030 and speak with Cynthia Bowman, our administrative manager. We will continue to provide great customer service and the highest quality biodynamic preparations "so that the earth may be healed."

On behalf of the staff and current board of directors, we thank each and every one of you for your continued support. Our new home provides a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the magnificent results of the biodynamic farming method. We thank Hugh Courtney, who, after many years of dedicated work, has left the organization to pursue his interests in research, writing, consulting, and further experimentation with the preparations and pest peppers. I hope you will join me in wishing him well in his future endeavors. As well, we thank all of you who came to Woolwine over the years to help us make the biodynamic preparations. We plan to send out more frequent updates as we settle in. Check our website periodically for news about upcoming initiatives, preparation workshops, and other news.

Regards,

Gena M. Nonini

President, JPI Board of Directors
Volunteer Acting Executive Director

Applied Biodynamics

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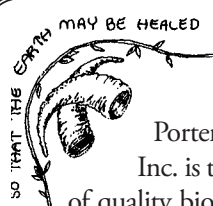
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Mission

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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continued from page 1

Biodynamics in the Sacred Hoop

same name. It's interesting, though, because on January 1 of this year, there were four eagles on my place here – three bald eagles and one golden eagle.

HF: *How big is your farm now?*

DS: We originally purchased eighty acres and I leased 140 acres next door. Two years ago, the owner went through a bankruptcy, so I purchased the 140 acres. Now I have 220 acres of dryland pasture.

HF: *How long have you been in ranching? Did that come after the plant business?*

DS: My dad was ranch manager and a cowboy in Nevada. I was raised on ranches and I got my first horse when I was seven. We always had a garden. I was raised on goat milk and fresh meat and vegetables. I went to an agricultural college, learned how to shoe horses and then took up sheep shearing two years later when the horseshoeing business was flooded with people only trained for a couple weeks. Around that time, there were lame horses all over the place because of poor shoeing. I didn't want to be associated with that, so I turned to sheep and have been shearing sheep ever since.

HF: *I imagine that business means you travel a lot.*

DS: Yes, throughout most of the Western states, especially Washington, Oregon, Nevada, California.

HF: *Where did you go to college?*

DS: Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo [California], but I was really disappointed that they didn't have any organic or alternative-style offerings at the time. It was all conventionally focused. The feed classes were really disgusting because they taught students how toxins could be substituted for trace minerals in feed. Anyhow, I was only there for three trimesters, and then I had an opportunity

to drop my regular classes and go to horseshoeing school.

HF: *So you had a sensitivity to organic and naturally produced food from early on...*

DS: Yeah. I spent my early twenties gardening and logging in the high Sierras. I also got my mom back into sheep rearing. That's when I learned to shear. In the early 1980s, I moved up to Ashland, Oregon and started to farm organic alfalfa on forty-three leased acres. That's what I was familiar with growing in my past. After I did that for a few years, I bought my own equipment and started CSA market gardening. That was about the time I discovered biodynamics. I also started to do Native American ceremonies in the early '80s and started to look for the intersection between those ceremonies and organic gardening. That's when I got introduced to biodynamics as a spiritual farming practice.

HF: *What was your first impression of biodynamics?*

DS: What really hooked me was the spiritual aspect of it. I was looking for that in the native ceremonies and the organic gardening, but the spiritual connections between the two were missing. Then someone said there was a European spiritual method. I asked, "What kind of spirits are they dealing with?" Then they mentioned salamanders, fairies, gnomes, and undines and I thought, "Wow! The sweat lodge I'm dealing with refers to earth, air, fire, and water. What relationship do those have to do with that?" There is a direct correlation. That was an "a-ha" for me, so I started going to the Oregon biodynamic group. I just thought, "This is it. This is what I've been looking for." Shortly after that, one of the native community people I was working with received an inheritance and said, "I'd really like to see someone raising buffalo around here." I told them that I was interested, but that I couldn't afford to get into it. Since they didn't know about raising animals, we partnered to raise buffalo. We invested in some young females, two heifers. We raised them up and when they got to breeding age, I enrolled them in a breeding program with the Wildlife Safari Park in Winston, Oregon. For twelve years, I had two cows in the breeding program and I got every other calf. However, the first year, they had seven bulls in the program. So, they took my two cows and gave me a bull instead of a calf that year. That's what introduced me to the butchering ceremony I do because I got this five-year-old zoological herd bull and found out from my buffalo contacts that he was too old to bring into the herd I had. You have to start with a young bull if you want to introduce him into your herd. They said he was a "butcher bull." So, I went to the sweat lodge and asked how I should butcher using honor and respect in the old way. The idea for the ceremony came directly through the sweat lodge

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*)



Buffalo mother and calf

to me. The ceremony I use didn't come through talking with the native elders, but directly through the spiritual connections that I had been fostering with biodynamics. I thought, "Wow – I can do all this." There were two full blood Lakota elders in Ashland, Oregon at the time. I invited them to help me out with the ceremony, and they came. They attended the first buffalo kill, which was on foot with a spear and four days of ceremony. There was no fear, no anger – only prayer ties and song. The elders saw the whole thing and they were amazed. They agreed that's how it should be done.

HF: *That's amazing!*

DS: It's totally amazing. I've put down over seventy animals now, on foot with a blade.

HF: *You had been working with native people for some time before that. Were most of them Lakota people, or were other tribes involved?*

DS: The other tribes were not doing much ceremony. So, the Lakota ceremony has become the intertribal norm because they are the ones who have been doing it. It was totally illegal to do native ceremony until 1978. The Native American Freedom of Religion Act was passed in that year. In 1973, the Wounded Knee incident, the Longest March and the Lakota uprising happened. That eventually resulted in the Religious Freedom Act. So, in the early '80s, ceremony was just starting to come back. But, after centuries of persecution for practicing the native ceremonies, there was trepidation. They were even afraid to speak their language. Most of the elders I know had their mouths washed out with soap as kids if they spoke their own language. You were shot, killed, or locked up if you were caught doing ceremony. Powwow was accepted because it is non-ceremonial; it's a social event and anyone can partake in it. There was no ceremony involved in Powwow. There are no words to the songs, just "Hey

yeh, hey yeh, hey yeh..." Any ceremony that did happen was hidden. Now that we are thirty-five years down the road, some of the local tribes are bringing back their own ceremonies. The Lakota were the first; they still had their traditions. When things changed, they were pretty outspoken about wanting to share them.

HF: *There is more diversity in the ceremonies now?*

DS: Yes, most tribes are bringing out their ceremonies. They are also inclusive of others. I was adopted by one of the elders who saw what I was doing with the buffalo. I am considered Lakota now, but I am non-native born and raised. I identify with the Ogallala band of the Lakota Sioux.

HF: *Have you spent time in Lakota territory?*

DS: I go back to South Dakota every year where I have a lot of connections. At the bi-annual, November 2012 Biodynamic Conference in Wisconsin, I presented with a friend of mine, Arval Looking Horse, an elder from the Cheyenne River Reservation. He was selected as the spiritual elder to help open the conference.

HF: *So, your original intention in raising the buffalo wasn't necessarily for meat – but to help preserve the species?*

DS: No, I was interested in raising them for meat too. The Native American culture is based on buffalo. They are an important part of health and welfare of the native people. People in the cities wanted the meat as well.

HF: *Did you know all along you would be processing the meat yourself?*

DS: I knew that eventually I would. I have been processing my own animals since I was seven or eight years old. When I processed my first buffalo, everyone insisted that I do it at a butcher plant, so that I could sell it with a USDA stamp. With that experience, the first thing I found out is that buffalo are exempt from USDA regulation. The reason is that processing costs are so high. Buffalo are so strong they can destroy a butcher plant, so they are exempt. I found that out after I spent a \$1,000 on butchering costs – and cleaning up a very expensive mess at the plant. Nevertheless, if the meat is not USDA inspected, it can't be resold. You must sell direct to the consumer, which is exactly what I want to do anyway. I want to keep the sacred hoop intact – the connection between the raising of the animal and those who are going to benefit from it. If you resell (or wholesale), you have to go through USDA, which is a bureaucratic nightmare. Now, I do all of my own processing and sell all my meat through growers markets and by word of mouth.

HF: *Do you process the meat on your own farm?*

DS: Yes.

HF: *And you received guidance in the sweat lodge on how to do so in a spiritual manner?*

DS: Yes, it involves keeping everything connected through what the native people call the sacred hoop of life. Keeping that connection sure seems to work. I now talk to people on the reservation about raising buffalo and how I use ceremony to butcher them. I'm very interested in bringing the biodynamic aspect of raising them back to native people raising buffalo.

HF: *What was unique about the spiritual message you received?*

DS: The uniqueness was in how traditional it was. I had been looking for people who do traditional ceremony with buffalo for a long time. What I found was a very minimal approach, including among those at the intertribal buffalo cooperative. They are interested in getting people to raise buffalo on tribal lands. Their mission is to bring back cultural and traditional heritage skills, and yet they are mostly raising buffalo for commercial purposes with no cultural heritage attached. I have contacted all of the tribes about the heritage practices, but none have responded. They just produce meat for commercial use in the standard way.

HF: *Without the traditional practices attached?*

DS: Yes. It's shocking because their mandate is to bring back the heritage skills. It has been really disappointing that I have had no contact with any native people doing ceremony with buffalo, with the exception of my friend Arval Looking Horse who is doing a fairly extensive ceremony. Most of the people I am aware of who are doing buffalo kills may light a smudge, do a sweat, and pray about the buffalo, but there is a sense of loss – rather than the honor and gifting that I get with my ceremony. The women are crying. They wave the smoke in the four directions and they shoot the buffalo that is looking at them. When I tell them there is another way, they respond that you are liable to injure the animal or that someone could get hurt and so on. What is really amazing is that none of that negativity enters into the ceremony that I use. In mine, the buffalo that I want comes to me naturally. It goes into the kill corral, and it's a gift. It is as if he is looking for another way. When I go to him, I tell the animal there is better way to go. All the other buffalo look at the one in question as if to say, "Oh, he's talking about you!" The chosen buffalo responds as if, "I don't know what's involved, but this is kind of neat." And on the fourth day, I go out there with a spear. Just this year I've started using a bow, which means I have to get really close. I get in there with the herd and get real close to the one I need.

HF: *How far away are you when you shoot the arrow?*

DS: At most, about thirty to forty feet. The other day, I shot one. I used just one arrow. I put out the feed and he walked out to the end pile and was looking the other

JPI Leader Honored with Buffalo Skull

After a buffalo is taken, it is customary for Devon Strong to do a sweat lodge ceremony with the skull of the animal. In the ceremony, he places the skull on the altar of the lodge and asks who the skull should go to. Usually, the skull goes to a native elder, but, about four years ago, prior to a national conference sponsored by the Oregon group, Devon received a message to present the skull to Hugh Courtney. As it turns out, Hugh was preparing to attend the conference at the time, from his home in Virginia. When Devon told his colleagues that he was going to present the skull to Hugh, they responded positively, saying Hugh could use the skull for making preparations. However, it was a male skull and not suitable for the oak bark preparation (BD #505). When Devon called Hugh and told him that he planned to give it to him as a way to honor the traditional aspect of the buffalo, Hugh was thrilled. He said that he had always wanted to use buffalo in preparations making, but had been discouraged by Native Americans who were skeptical of the European roots of biodynamics. So, although the intention was not to make preparations with this particular skull, he was honored and requested that it be presented to him by a Native American elder. Devon helped to arrange the giving of that gift through one of the elders from Oregon. The process ended up teaching the elder about biodynamics in a new way. It was a deeply symbolic gesture, an honoring of the gifts from two continents. Since Hugh received the skull, he has been able to find source material, and with the help of Native American biodynamic practitioners, has been able to produce biodynamic preparations based on sheaths and manure obtained from bison being raised on nearby farms. He believes that the quality of those preparations could be improved if the bison were being raised using biodynamic methods.

way. It's as if he was offering himself to me. The rest of the herd was looking at me. When he was shot, the herd came over to him; they were upset and trying to get him up. At that point, I take the prayer ties I used on the altar of the sweat lodge ceremony four days before, and I walk out into this herd of upset buffalo and hold up my eagle fan. They part like the Red Sea. I walk up and put the prayer ties on the buffalo's horns and then I back off and the other buffalo come up around him while I go get the

truck. It's remarkable to be able to walk up into the herd of buffalo, with blood all over their faces from rubbing on the deceased, including my big bull. But they back off; they really respect and honor my place in the herd. The old ones just go back to eating as if to say "Yup, that's what he does. He's not after us, but he needed to take that one and that's okay."

HF: *Incredible. That's beautiful.*

DS: It is. The other people who raise buffalo say you can't do that without getting hurt. They think you're in danger when you do that. That's bringing the fear and the anger into it. If you bring fear into it, the buffalo get angry. If you get upset with them, then they get fearful and run off. But if you do the whole ceremony with no fear and no anger for anyone involved in it, it works.

HF: *Have you shared this with others, and are they receptive to it?*

DS: Only a few are receptive. We recently did an abbreviated ceremony with another native person, and he said we need to do a whole lot more of it. He was

impressed. Nonetheless, some of the commercial guys who are full blood Indian aren't willing to accept advice from an "outsider" like myself. I'm also trying to bring the biodynamic aspect into organic gardening programs on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They are trying to get the native people to raise organic gardens. The response of the local people is generally "Were not farmers; we're just not connected that way." I'm trying to get them to realize that the connection that can be made through the buffalo can also come through organic gardening. That perks up everyone's ears, because they are innately aware of the connection with the buffalo, even if it is not always reflected in how the buffalo are killed for meat.

HF: *Can you say more about how you have connected biodynamics with the buffalo?*

DS: After raising the buffalo for a few years in Oregon, I started wondering why I couldn't use buffalo horn for the preparations. The biodynamic group in Oregon had been ridiculing me for trying to make preparations with sheep and goat horns, which I had been using prior to the buffalo.



They told me to join the preparation quality committee and they'd show me why one doesn't use those. So, I took the preparations I had made with the sheep and goat horns up to the quality people and compared it to cow horn manure they had. You could feel the difference in the quality. It was evident to me from the feel of mine that it had no power to it. But when I then made the BD #500 preparation with the buffalo horns and manure, I was amazed. Wow! That was different. When I took it to the preparation makers group, they agreed that it had incredible power, even more power than the preparations made with the cow manure. I took my buffalo preparations to the group for a couple years, and Heike-Marie Eubanks remarked how good it was. For one thing, it holds its power in storage. Finally, Wali Via followed Heike-Marie in accepting it. That's about the time my piece in *Biodynamics* came out (2009) saying buffalo is the future of biodynamics over next ten years. That fall, Harald Hoven of Rudolf Steiner College (CA) raised the question with the international group. They wrote me and asked me if I would like to come present at the next international conference in Switzerland. In 2010, I presented there. When I told them about the connection to the Native American traditions and that the buffalo preparations turned out really well in the opinion of the Oregon group, they were intrigued. They thought that's exactly the connection we should cultivate with the cows. The ideas were very well received. I came back feeling justified – that, yes, we can use buffalo in the North American preparations. Incidentally, the Oregon group is made up of eight or ten farmers, not just a bunch of gardeners around one farmer who oversees the group. The quality control group consists of actual farmers who make and use the preparations. Together, they study the variations in the preparations. The international group believes it's better when farmers who use the preparations can go back and forth with each other. It helps avoid an authoritarian situation, which can happen with just one farmer.

HF: *How long have you been working with people on the organic garden project?*

DS: Three or four years now. I started making the preparations at the Waldorf school in Kyle, South Dakota.

HF: *A Waldorf school on the reservation?*

DS: It's only a kindergarten, but it's been there twelve years. The students are native, about ten–twenty kids. It's independently supported by a German and Austrian group.

HF: *What's your role in the project?*

DS: They had been thinking of doing a garden. I said, "Well, if you're going to do a garden, you have to do it biodynamically, and being on the reservation, it would be really interesting to do it with buffalo." They said, "Of

course." We have a whole native aspect to the Waldorf training. We are trying to bring back the native culture on the reservation through the school. The problem is that most of the teachers are not native people. It's hard to get them trained in native culture and language, while most of the native helpers are not Waldorf trained. There is kind of a dichotomy there. We started making the preparations two years ago. We did BD #500, BD #501, and barrel compost. The first year, I made all the compost preparations at my place, and I gave them a full set. The preparations we made at the school were much more than they needed there, so I took some down to Slim Buttes, also in South Dakota, where Tom Cook runs 400 community gardens with his brother Louis Cook. They are starting to use the preparations too.

HF: *Four hundred community gardens? How are they set up?*

DS: They have a grant program to help people set up gardens, like community gardens, at their homes all over the reservation. Tom sends out equipment, and his brother raises starts. The preparations are mostly used on the starts. They were really intrigued by the use of buffalo manure for the preparations. They didn't have any idea what biodynamics was. This year they showed up at the national biodynamic conference in Wisconsin because they had been hearing about it. It's taking a hold.

HF: *You are really infusing biodynamics into a lot of facets of Native American culture.*

DS: Yeah, what I really want to do, and what came to me in a ceremony when I came back from Europe in 2010, is to get Native American people making preparations with the buffalo and to introduce biodynamics as a way of enlivening Native American land. Nothing needs the benefit of biodynamic enlivenment more than native lands. And, they need to be honored spiritually through the buffalo. That's a much larger project than doing preparations with buffalo and getting native people to make preparations. It's about getting people to raise buffalo using biodynamics. That will bring back honor to the system. It is starting to happen. I saw that at the last national biodynamic conference in Wisconsin. It's beginning to become an exponential growth curve, like where organics was over a decade ago.

HF: *That's really remarkable. You are not only re-enlivening the soil and the food, but re-enlivening a culture.*

DS: Re-enlivening a traditional culture, yes.

HF: *Do you have any thoughts about taking this indigenous re-enlivening globally?*

DS: Yes. That was talked about in Switzerland in 2010. Other traditional cultures are starting to use their own animals. Camels in Egypt, for instance, and the cow in India, of

course. There is something to be said for using the animals native to the country in question. There is power in it.

HF: *Is there anything unique you can say about making the preparations with buffalo?*

DS: One thing is that it is very easy to tell a female buffalo horn from a male buffalo horn because of the size. The male horn has twice the diameter. On cows, people look for calving rings. That can work in the East, but in our dry heat, steers have rings on horns because of the seasonal stress in the West. This is a problem, because a lot of the cattle in the US are raised in the West, even if they are butchered in the Midwest. Other than that, the preparations are made in the same way as one would with cow parts.

HF: *Is anyone else making the preparations with buffalo?*

DS: I believe the Viroqua group in Wisconsin is making some.

HF: *How about using the preparations? Is it any different with the buffalo preparations?*

DS: I use the same amounts. I think they are more potent, so one could perhaps use less, but I have them available, so I use them as normally indicated.

HF: *Do you use them on both your pasture and vegetable crops?*

DS: Just the vegetables. I haven't been able to use them on pastures because I don't have a sprayer. They are hard to use without a sprayer on more than fifteen–twenty acres.

HF: *What has been the feedback from people using your preparations?*

DS: The garden people have been adamant that they notice an increase in the energy in the garden. Recently, Wali Via took my preparations to the Fall Creek* conference and reported back to me that my preparations were among the top five best analytically rated in the country. They did cation exchange tests to measure the nutrient holding capacity, the amount of nitrogen, and other scientific evaluations. They were interested in finding out what the numbers were on the preparations. Wali was very complimentary about the buffalo preparations. They were at the upper level of all testing done, and the BD #500 and barrel compost were among the top three in nitrogen content.

HF: *What's your prognosis in the wider scheme of things? Are there any trends that strike you?*

DS: I think things are coming around. It feels like there is a last gasp of interest in where one's food is coming from. There's a desire to connect with the farmers directly involved in growing food. The food movement is coming to fruition – from the hippie resurrection days to our modern time. But modern conventional agriculture has wiped out most of our options. We're fighting a last

stand against conventional techniques that are trying to answer the world's needs while destroying the world's resources at the same time. There is a critical mass that is making a valiant stand against the conventional majority. That majority is still unaware of how desperate the food movement is to preserve the diversity of seed stock and natural food sources that are under direct threat by conventional agriculture.

HF: *It seems like a daunting task.*

DS: Biodynamics is where organic agriculture was fifteen or twenty years ago. Now the organic movement is more accepted. Not long ago, organic agriculture was a small slice of food production. A lot of people who are into organic agriculture have now heard of biodynamics. It has the potential to grow like organics did.

HF: *I hear some people say that organic agriculture is looking for its soul. Perhaps biodynamics can carry the spiritual message?*

DS: Yes. Usually that's the nemesis, that biodynamics has a spiritual connotation, which the conventional people can criticize to submission; but that's the connection to the people that I think is resonating.

HF: *Rather than shy away from it, we should point out that's what differentiates us? And that the spiritual factor manifests in the quality of the produce?*

DS: Yes, and that its quality translates into science and is proven – better quality. The spiritual aspect is in the quality that you just can't replicate with conventional agriculture.

HF: *In a sense, it's coming out of the closet...*

DS: And in the same way, doing native ceremony with the buffalo is the cutting edge of coming out of the closet – because the native aspect is also coming back to light. It is being resurrected through the return of the traditions. It's a similar thing – to bring back that honor and respect that all agriculture demands, and to bring that respect to native communities for having held onto these ceremonies through the eons. For Native Americans, the buffalo were an important part of the connection to spirit, a connection that is so vital to biodynamics. Working with the two brings things together in such a beautiful way. I hope native people will be able to resonate with that and get behind the biodynamic movement as it takes off. If the Native American people can lead that process with their traditional ceremony and through the buffalo, then they will bring honor to traditional cultures.

HF: *Very well said. Thank you, Devon.*

* The Twelfth Annual Fellowship of the Preparation Makers (FOPM) Conference was held in Fall Creek, Oregon from February 28 – March 3, 2013. See the article by Patricia Frazier on facing page.

Oregon Hosts Twelfth Annual FOPM Conference

Patricia Frazier

The Twelfth Annual Fellowship of the Preparation Makers (FOPM) Conference was held in Oregon from February 28 – March 3, 2013. One of the oldest biodynamic community groups in the US, the Oregon Biodynamic Group, hosted the conference at Sky Camp in Fall Creek, Oregon, which was attended by almost sixty participants from across the United States and Canada. Sky Camp is a beautiful two-hundred-acre retreat facility in the mountains outside of Eugene, Oregon, run by the Kiwanis Organization. It was the perfect setting for the gathering of dedicated preparation makers who meet once a year to discuss making biodynamic preparations in an in-depth study format.

The theme of this year's conference was "The Biodynamic Preparations of Yarrow and Valerian – Gestures, Perspectives, and Insights." Building upon the theme of polarity between horn manure and horn silica, covered in last year's

conference in Hotchkiss, Colorado, the conference planning committee endeavored to build an in-depth study of the two compost preparations, valerian and yarrow. Using the guiding principle of the differences and similarities of the gestures, perspectives, and insights gleaned by the conference speakers in their experience of working with these two preparations, conference participants and speakers engaged in a multi-faceted experience of the inner worlds of valerian and yarrow. Plant study, practical preparation making, planetary associations within the compost pile, and (in the case of yarrow) animal characteristics were the subjects of lectures by Harald Hoven, of the Northern California Biodynamic Group, Lloyd Nelson of Paonia, Colorado, and Uli Hacke of Ontario, Canada. Beth Wieting of the Oregon Biodynamic Group discussed how the preparations work within the compost pile from the perspective



Photo courtesy of Abby Porter

of work with elemental beings. I discussed the feminine perspective in biodynamics. Further techniques included circle discussions, hands-on practicums with both preparations, as well as artistic and eurythmy exercises. A talk by Dr. Lisa Alba, an anthroposophic physician, on the workings of sulphur and phosphorous in the human body, completed the study.

Unique to the Fellowship conferences, a collegial relationship between participant preparation makers, speakers, and the inner life of the two preparations of valerian and yarrow became our common ground for rich and meaningful discussions. An emerging trend of conference attendance by new, young farmers was again a highlight of this year's conference. One farmer and preparation maker, Mickey Taylor from Bonners Ferry, Idaho, states:

"Finding a place in the larger biodynamic community has fundamentally changed my intentions around agriculture. The ability to connect with others who are working in the same direction is a rare opportunity that I would not pass up. My interest has peaked, and I have found myself re-inspired to work with the preparations and the forces that shape them. It was very inspiring to meet other farmers who are working with these forces. I had been feeling like an island amongst the genocide that I see around us, and was heartened to see others sharing the same fears and goals. In the last month I have done much work and research to further biodynamics in our community as well my own experience with it. Last week I made the biggest compost pile in my life, over 500 tons, and have been seeing it in a whole new fashion."

A particular highlight of this year's conference was a tour of Wintergreen Farm in Noti, Oregon. Farm owner, Wali Via, also a long-standing and influential member of the Oregon Biodynamic Group, toured conference participants through his farming operation and the beautiful preparation garden where the Oregon group buries their preparations yearly in

ceremony. Wali gave a demonstration of his flowform used for stirring preparations, spraying equipment, and showed properly stored preparations from within his storage facility. Later, conference participants traveled to another storage facility utilized by the group for communal storage of preparations. This gathering that preceded the conference beautifully showcased the community aspect of biodynamic preparation making, and was inspirational to newly developing regional biodynamic groups from around the continent. The conference planning committee of FOPM would like to thank the Oregon Biodynamic Group for all their hard work in hosting this very important conference.

The FOPM Conferences began twelve years ago, bringing preparation makers together once a year to discuss the future of biodynamic preparations in North America. Subjects such as acquiring expertise in the making of preparations; assessing quality of biodynamic preparations through research in methodology; acquisition of the materials used in preparation making; and continued consistent distribution of preparations were then, and are now, at the heart of these discussions. Biodynamic preparation education is accomplished currently by the annual FOPM Conference as part of the work of the whole Fellowship. As the Fellowship wrestles with how to accomplish our goal of ensuring the availability of quality preparations in North America now and in the future, the annual FOPM conference is an important opportunity to bring fresh ideas, solutions, and a close collegial relationship environment to both experienced and new biodynamic practitioners on the North American continent.

Pat Frazier is a biodynamic farmer in Western Colorado. She is the chair of the conference planning committee of the FOPM and a board member of Josephine Porter Institute of Applied Biodynamics.

Meet the JPI Staff

Abigail Porter

Our recent move of JPI from Woolwine to nearby Floyd, Virginia was possible because of the dedication and commitment of the JPI team of Cynthia Bowman, Larry Mabe, Carolyn Hanchey, Kendell Cockram and Terry Williams. The JPI employees are on the ground and in the trenches; they are the heart and soul of JPI. Cynthia Bowman, or Sid as you may know her, came to us five years ago with a strong business background. After working fourteen years in the corporate world of American Martinville Furniture Corporation doing CAD engineering drawings and then being promoted to administrative assistant, she opened her own florist shop when

the company moved overseas. Three years later, she sold the shop (which is still in operation), and for the next seven years was the office manager for a tax preparation service. Cynthia initially started out at JPI helping with accounting and other office duties. She then became office manager, and in the last couple years was trained to carry out the administrative tasks previously performed by the executive director. With the additional responsibilities, she became the administrative manager. Cynthia's voice is the one you most frequently will hear when you call to place an order or make inquiries. If she is not available, Carolyn Hanchey will be fielding your call.



From left to right- Kendell Cockram, Larry Mabe, Carolyn Hanchey, and Cynthia Bowman

Carolyn, who is a certified nurse assistant, was initially hired by Hugh Courtney as a private sitter for his father in the last months of his life. Then, two years ago, Carolyn was hired as JPI office assistant to process orders. She is also in charge of accounts receivable. She was previously a substitute teacher and enjoys gardening, animals, birds, and needlepoint. Her calm, friendly demeanor is a great asset to the office.

Larry Mabe joined JPI twelve years ago and became the Pfeiffer product technician after college courses in biology and microbiology and training by previous Pfeiffer technician, bacteriologist Jennifer Reeve. Jennifer trained Larry in the process of making the Pfeiffer BD Compost Starter and the Pfeiffer BD Field and Garden Spray, and in the culturing of the special bacterial strains needed to make both products. Jennifer received her training from Margrit Selke and Maria Linder of the Pfeiffer Foundation, both of whom were trained directly by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer. Larry has a valuable foundation in the Pfeiffer process and has made most of the two Pfeiffer products offered by JPI for the past twelve years.

In addition to his work as Pfeiffer technician, Larry has been trained by Hugh Courtney in making the preparations and has assisted in the workshops. He had previously done much of the farm and garden work. He packages most of the preparations and even fills in at the office in a pinch, answering phones. Larry is multi-talented, being the “go to guy” for any mechanical repairs on the farm or with any of the other equipment. He has even built special tools needed for the preparations work. Basic construction and building skills round out his contribution to the daily operations at JPI.

Kendell Cockram is our newest and youngest employee. He was hired a year ago as Larry’s assistant to help with preparation making and packaging. He comes from a farming background and isn’t afraid of hard work. He grew up on his family’s heritage farm, a 300-acre beef and hay operation where he still works. He adds youthful enthusiasm and energy to the daily tasks. His farming skills will be key as we develop the new farm location.

Terry Williams provides seasonal help during the spring for dandelion picking and other busy times of the year. He was hired by JPI in the spring of 2011 as temporary help after he lost his job at Stuart Flooring due to the economy. Terry runs his own landscaping business and will be helping JPI out on an as-needed basis at our new location in Floyd.

The team at JPI is committed to the value of the work that JPI is doing and is enthusiastically engaged in the new adventure. Their various skills and personalities complement each other and create a good working environment.

We’ve Moved!

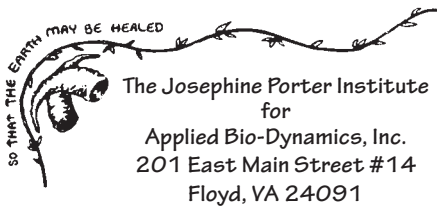
Please note our new address and phone numbers:

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“Life in the Western hemisphere is something quite different from life in the Eastern hemisphere. Life in Africa, Asia and Europe has a totally different significance than life in America. . . It is best to use horns from your own locality. There is a very strong kinship between the forces present in the cow horns of a given area and the other forces at work in that area.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, p. 79



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