

HUGH COURTNEY

A Lifetime Legacy to the Biodynamic Movement

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IN MOST HUMAN CULTURES, there is an understanding that with chronological age comes experience, knowledge, and therefore hopefully wisdom. Thus, the label “elder” has the connotation of a person who carries the responsibility and capacity to lead, guide, and mentor their families, communities, or peoples. In the last several years, the biodynamic community has chosen to honor one of our “elders” at the Biodynamic Conference that brings us together from all parts of the continent. This fall in Louisville, we will honor Hugh Courtney.

Hugh is the first to say that he is not a farmer, and he didn’t even enter the biodynamic arena until he was in his forties. But in 1976 he responded to the offer by Josephine Porter, a board member of what is now the Biodynamic Association (BDA), to teach anyone who would come to her farm how to make the biodynamic preparations according to the indications given by Rudolf Steiner in the Agriculture Lectures. Hugh has never looked back. After this fateful meeting followed by eight years of mentoring by then-elder Josephine Porter, he took up the preparations work at the request of a member of the BDA Board of Directors when Josephine died in May 1984. Hugh subsequently founded the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics (JPI) in October 1985 to honor her many years of service to biodynamics and to fulfill a personal commitment to her to create a permanent “home” for the biodynamic preparations. That “home” was created on the farm in Woolwine, Virginia, owned by the Courtney family. After the founding of JPI, making and distribution of the preparations, plus training others in their making and use, became the mission of the new organization.

In the years since the founding of JPI, Hugh has consistently and faithfully made preparations every year and has taught, cajoled, encouraged, admonished, and guided the rest of us as we endeavored to do the same. Not afraid of plain talk or controversy, he has been a tireless advocate of the large-scale use of the biodynamic preparations on the North American continent and has conducted research regarding their characteristics and efficacy while encouraging others in their own research efforts. One example of this commitment has been the “Recom-

mendations for Working with Crops, Sequential Spraying, and Ashing,” which he has offered to the biodynamic community for many years.

Recently, JPI moved from the Courtney farm, and Hugh, now in his early eighties, is working with his grandson Jeremiah Proctor to establish a new initiative called Earth Legacy Agriculture (ELA). ELA is a natural next step for Hugh in carrying Josephine Porter’s vision forward and a way for him to move fully and deeply into a more individually-focused mentoring and guiding role, much as Josephine Porter did with him decades before. Earth Legacy Agriculture provides “consultation and support services for the grower,” including biodynamic preparations and training regarding their use. Ideally, these products and services are provided on an ongoing basis over a multi-year period, including in-person and phone consultation.

As part of Earth Legacy’s work, Hugh is focusing strongly on animal, insect, and weed “pest” peppers and is also developing unique products based on his knowledge and experience. The first of these that will become available is the Biodynamic Field and Farm Energizer kit. Seminars, workshops, and “work weekends” at Earth Legacy also offer opportunities to work intensively in small groups in learning about and experiencing preparation work under Hugh’s guidance. More information about Earth Legacy’s work is available at:

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There is no doubt that Hugh’s commitment to Josephine Porter’s legacy—and to biodynamic agriculture—has made an incalculable quantitative and qualitative contribution to the future. In addition to the thousands of gallons of preparations he has made and used with hundreds of individuals and groups over the years, he has set the standard for preparations training and conducted or

substantively contributed to countless research projects and efforts. Perhaps most importantly, many of the next generation who are now taking their places as the leaders of the biodynamic movement started their careers under Hugh's tutelage.

Hugh's mission and vision for the application of biodynamic preparations on this continent has carried him, and us, into the future of our work together. The "golden thread" throughout these years, and the years ahead, was well articulated in the last paragraph of the introduction he wrote to the collection of lectures entitled *What is Biodynamics?* (SteinerBooks 2005):

Our task at this time, during the descent and ascent of the etheric Christ, is to work via the force of the life ether, by always remaining in the realm of the living. We have no other tools to do that except the nine biodynamic preparations.... It matters not whether we use them on the acreage of a huge farm or on a small backyard garden. What matters most is that all *nine* are used. Implant the sword of Michael in the earth through the preparations. Use them to summon the elementals to serve the Christ. Take up our human task of spiritualizing the Earth.

Thanks, Hugh. We look forward to celebrating your leadership and commitment when we come together in November.



Conference workshops with Hugh Courtney: "Understanding and Using the Nine Biodynamic Preparations," and "Hands-On with the Biodynamic Preparations"

Karen Davis-Brown has been a biodynamic practitioner since 1999 in northern California, Minnesota, the Catskills of upstate New York, and now central Tennessee. Karen is a Contributing Editor for the *Biodynamics* journal and has been a regular contributor to *Stir* magazine.



Conference workshops with Karen Davis-Brown: "Geomancy and the Health of the Biodynamic Organism" and "A Woman's Eye View of the Farm with the Radical Farmwives"

Photos: Hugh Courtney with grandson Jeremiah Proctor, stirring the preparations during a training session, and burying the horn manure preparation

