

SUMMARY OF  
FELLOWSHIP OF PREPARATION MAKERS INTERVIEW  
WITH STEVE ADAMS AND BRIAN WICKERT  
AUGUST 2018

**PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY RESPONSES –**

***How long have you been making preparations?***

We have been making preparation since 1998. We have a preparation making day every spring and every fall. We have individuals help with making 504, 507 and barrel compound at different times than the spring and fall events. People also help in picking dandelions, yarrow, and equisetum at different times. We have been buying our chamomile flowers from Mountain Rose Herbs. We bury cow horns every year and make most of the compost pile preparations each year unless we have an oversupply of one of them and then we skip a year. An oversupply is defined as over one gallon for compost pile preparations 502-507. On Valerian we would call two quarts an oversupply.

***Do you currently make the preparations as an individual, a group, or as part of an organization? If a group or organization, with whom? Who are the main people who hold the preparation making?***

We make our BD Preparations in a group, the Viroqua BD Group. I (Brian Wickert) also make some BD 500 and BD Barrel Compound individually. Currently Steven Adams and Brian Wickert are the two people who keep the continuity of making BD Preparations every year here in Viroqua, Wisconsin.

***Please describe the location where you make the preparations (climate, soils, landscape).***

**CLIMATE:** Temperate zone with increasingly Sub Tropical in the summer.

**SOIL:** Underlying mineral base is karst geology, which is a porous limestone. Our soils range from clay to sandy silt loam, often in the same field. Where we bury most of the preparations, the soil is a mixture of clay and silt with a small amount of sand. This description would cover the pits where we bury the cow horns, intestines, mesentery, bladders, nettle, and compound preparations. The cow skulls are buried in a nearly stagnant spring fed pond which contains a great deal of rotting leaves, twigs from trees surrounding the pond. The pond drains very slowly and continuously toward the creek.

**LANDSCAPE:** Our regional landscape is called the "driftless," because it is unglaciated. Steven's farm is located in a valley surrounded by ridges which represent the original level of the landscape. The preparations are buried in the valley part of the farm in well drained locations.

***Which preparations do you make and on average how much of each?***

Cow Horns: We bury 200-500 cow horns for BD horn manure, depending on the year.

BD Barrel Compound: 15 or 30 gallons depending on the year. We use stinging nettle in our recipe.

Prepared BD 500: We usually make some BD 500 into Prepared BD 500 by adding the compost pile preparations.

BD 502: Yarrow 4-8 stag bladders/year

BD 503: Chamomile- 36 to 60 inches of intestines

BD 504: Stinging Nettle The last 2 years we buried 5 gallons of chopped stinging nettle

BD 505: Oak Bark - 3-8 skulls depending on the year. Each skull yields about a 2-3 cups of oak bark preparation.

BD 506: Dandelions - 4-8 pillows, usually using 3-5 lb. of dried dandelion blossoms. One 5-gallon pail of dandelion blossoms dries down to about 1-1.25 lb. dried blossoms.

BD 507: Valerian 1 to 4 cups each spring. (We would like to get over 4 cups each year.)

BD 508: Equisetum- We pick about two or three five-gallon pails of equisetum and put this in a plastic barrel to make Equisetum Tea. We also pick 2 to 3 five-gallon pails of equisetum to dry for use later.

***How do you obtain preparation making ingredients? How do you obtain the sheaths?***

Cow Horns-We get cow horns from a slaughterer house in Hereford, TX. Most of the cows are range cows meaning they calve on the plains of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico.

Stag Bladders and Yarrow Flowers-We wildcraft the yarrow from local farms. Local hunters supply us with 3-8 bladders per year.

Cow Intestines and Chamomile Flowers-We buy the flowers from Rose Mountain Herbs. We get intestines from a local family run slaughterhouse or an on-farm slaughtering service.

Sting Nettle-We wildcraft the Stinging Nettle from local farms.

Domestic Animal Skulls and Oak Bark-We get the oak bark from local wood lots. We have White Oak available. We get skulls from a local family run slaughterhouse and or from an on-farm slaughtering service.

Mesentery/Peritoneum and Dandelion Flowers-We pick the dandelions on local farms. We get mesentery/peritoneum from a local family run slaughterhouse or an on-farm slaughtering service.

Valerian Flowers-We pick valerian blossoms on local farms and use a wheatgrass press to make the juice.

Cow Manure-We get manure from a local 100% organic grass-based dairy.

Silica Powder-We buy our silica powder from Continental Clay, a pottery supply distributor out of Minneapolis.

***Do you distribute the preparations to others? If yes, to whom?***

YES. We mostly distribute to local or regional farmers with whom we have some personal relationship. We have had \$1000 to \$2000 in preparation sales in recent years.

Packaging materials used to ship: Plastic bags; Chinese food containers; yogurt containers; other.

Ship via: UPS; USPS; Fed Ex

***Do you sell preparations? If so, what do you charge?***

We use the JPI retail price list as our retail price list. If someone makes the preparations with us or provides ingredients for the compost pile preparations we provide them at no charge for helping us gathering materials and making them. If someone comes to a regional event like our regional gathering, we sell them the preparations at one half of the JP price. If someone calls from outside our region, we ask if they are closer to some preparation makers in their region and suggest they buy preparations from them. If not, we sell them at the JPI retail price.

***Who have been your primary mentors in learning how to make, store, and apply the preparations? How long have you been working with them?***

- Clare Hall in early 1995
- Ruth and Dick Zinniker. Started to attend their preparation making in 1996.
- Walter Goldstein in 1996.
- Peter Proctor at a BDA workshop in 1996.
- Hugh Courtney. Began talking to Hugh in 1992 and began working with him in 1997.
- Dewane Morgan, beginning in 1998.

***Would you be comfortable sharing contact information of other preparation makers in your area?***

Yes, I would enjoy meeting more preparation makers.

**AUDIO INTERVIEW AUGUST 2018--**

MH: This is Marjory House, and it is August 3. I am interviewing Brian Wickert and Steven Adams.

BW: Hi Marjory, this is Brian.

SA: Hello, Steven here.

MH: All right, gentleman, I am going to start with our first question here. ***What was the doorway that led you to biodynamic agriculture?***

SA: I do not have an agricultural background originally. I grew up in a small town and had only done a little bit of gardening. I ended up moving to a farm here in Wisconsin in 1985 and started practicing agriculture. I came out of the food co-op movement, so I was really interested in organic food. I was trying to grow organically but I did not really have much training, so I got some tapes from one of the organic conferences, one by Walter Goldstein from Michael Fields talking about biodynamics and another one by a woman named Claire Hall who

is a biodynamic grower over in Minnesota. That got my interest, listening to those tapes, and I called both of them. They were my first two mentors, so that is kind of how I got in.

MH: Brian, do you also want to answer that question?

BW: Yeah, I will answer the question too. My doorway was that I got interested in looking for an education for our sons and I went to an alternative fair in Seattle. A guy there had a whole bunch of anthroposophical books and he gave me *The Essential Steiner* by McDermott and suggested I read that. Then we went home. My wife was a nurse at the time, and they had talked to her about education, nursing, economics, arts, and agriculture. I grew up on a corn/soybean/hog farm in Indiana and I have a degree in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University, but I had never worked in agriculture since I left college. Then I got into anthroposophy in Seattle Washington and moved to Wisconsin in 1995 so our sons could go to Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School. A year earlier Steven had started a biodynamic study, so I joined that study group. That is how I came into biodynamics: through alternative farming, alternative education, alternative medicine.

MH: So next is *what inspired you to begin making preparations?*

BW: I will take that one first this time. We started to have our study group and when we got through the chapter about making preparations it is like, gee, how do we make preparations? So, in 1998 we started to make preparations. The Waldorf school here was started by a bunch of back to the landers and the self-sufficiency impulse was really strong in our community. We looked at it and asked, what could we do for ourselves and not depend on others? So, making preparations was really attractive to me. Then we called Hugh Courtney and talked to him and he was very forthright that this is important work, this is serious work. If you are just dillydallying that is fine, but he really wanted to work with people who were serious about preparation making. Ruth and Dick Zinniker were on the other side of Wisconsin from us and Ruth had an annual fall preparation gathering, so we started to go over there and learn how to make BD preparations from Ruth. I looked at making preparations as a service to other people, because there were lots of people who wanted to do biodynamics, but the preparations were kind of like a bottleneck or a linchpin that had to be addressed. If you are really going to be of service to the biodynamic movement and you are not able to grow hundreds of acres of produce or products for them, then making the preparations would be a great service to all the people. That is how I got attracted to making preparations.

SA: I think the first preparation I actually made was 501, the horn silica and it was Claire Hall from Minnesota who helped me. It was 1996 if I remember correctly. She kind of got me going on that and that was the beginning of the season so we could bury it in in the spring. I got through that season and I still wanted to go further, so I had a conversation with Walter Goldstein down in East Troy. I said, "How can I learn more?" He said you need to come to Zinniker's Preparation Day. I said, "Oh geez, now I need to have a place to stay," and he said, "You can stay with us." He and Venta, his wife, were just so welcoming and they invited me to come and put me up in their house,. Then they took me to Zinniker's preparation gathering and that was how I got started learning.

BW: We started making preparations in 1998, so this would have been about the time you went to Zinniker's -- 1997 and 1998?

SA: Right, I went down there before I began making all the compost preparations.

BW: So 1995, 1996?

MH: Let's see, 1995, 1996 is when you started Steven?

SA: That is when I was just barely beginning, yes.

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MH: Okay, and 1997, 1998 for you Brian?

BW: Yes.

MH: All right, *how has your preparation making changed over the years and what insights have come to you as your preparation making has evolved?*

SA: Good question, that is a big one, how has it changed over the years. I remember the first time we took some of the compost preparations out of the ground, we felt like we did not know how to evaluate the results because it was all so new. I remember feeling really nervous. That is where going down to Zinniker's was really helpful. Not just once, we went year after year both spring and fall, Brian and I and sometimes other people as well. Gradually we started getting a feeling, not only for how to put the preparations together in the fall but also what the finished preparation might look like, smell like, feel like, when it came out in the spring. Of course, we had mixed results over the years. I can tell you, for example, that in the pit where we bury our horns, over the years we added compost to get more organic matter into it. One year we had a really wet year, and the horns came out really wet, so after that year we added quite a load of sand and mixed it in. It was a spot with a lot of clay, so we added quite a bit of sand to sort of leaven the soil a bit. We did things like that to adjust where we were working to get a better result and, generally speaking, they have worked pretty well. We have also noticed over the years that there are variable results that we cannot really account for. I think of it like the wine makers who say that the quality of the wine is different depending on the year. I think that can happen with preparations too. We have also noticed that sometimes the way 500 comes out at Zinniker's is similar to how it comes out here, even though we are halfway across the state. We have had times when the 500 will come out in an unusual way and it has been the same for them, which was very striking since we are so far apart.

BW: Okay, so how have preparation making practices changed over the years? When we first started out we just did not know what we were doing, and we just would follow the directions out of the book. We would call Hugh or talk to Ruth about what would be a good way to make it, what part of the mesentery was inside and outside, different things like that. Then, as we got better, I remember probably the fourth or fifth year going over to Ruth's, all of a sudden she says, "Okay, you take care of the stag bladder table this year." And I was going like, "What? I do not know anything; I am just too new to know anything." And she said, "Oh you will do fine." And of course, she would go around from table to table and make suggestions and corrections for people while the whole thing was going on. So that was a big step, seeing that this really is important to learn and that there are not that many people who know much about it if I could be considered knowledgeable after three or four years of watching. That was kind of a surprise to me.

SA: But it was also Ruth's way of teaching.

BW: Yeah that is true. And the insights that have come with making the preparations. I agree that every year is different, you just do not know, and there are so many variables each year to track. How many stag bladders do we have? When were the yarrow and the nettle picked? When did you get it in the ground? Then, there are so many different ways to make preparations. We would talk to Ruth about that and she would just brush it off and say, "If you do the work with enthusiasm and good intentions then the spiritual world will make up for your lack of knowledge. Just trust in the spiritual world."

SA: Yeah, she would say, "You do the best you can and trust the spiritual world will help out with your mistakes."

BW: That took a lot of pressure off. The insight was that it was not us just doing the physical work. Most years we would have some kind of opening invocation or prayer asking for help from the spiritual world on the day when we made these preparations. The insight is that we would reach out to others not in the physical world for

help in making and doing. New people who would come would usually just go along with it and say okay, this is something new. It was a novelty for most of them and they just went along with it. That is kind of what it was, building a little bit of community around preparation making with the invocation or prayer, and we learned that from Ruth.

SA: I remember a conversation I had on the phone once with Hugh Courtney, I do not remember what preparation it was, but I was worried that I was not doing it right. He said something to the effect of, "I often get people talking to me who are really concerned that they are doing something wrong. I think you are not likely to go too far wrong with preparations, but you can always do better." I have always remembered that, and I would say through the years that our processes have gotten better.

MH: Well, that leads me to the next question. *What unique techniques in making preparations have you adopted that you feel may be useful to others?* In that learning from Ruth, is there anything that you have changed or adopted, any techniques?

BW: I would say that we went to putting bricks around our dandelions. We put wire mesh at the bottom and then bricks around the sides because something would eat the dandelion blossoms and they would just be gone. I'm pretty sure it was the moles which are carnivorous, that were eating the mesentery. We would find no mesentery, but the dandelions were scattered all through the soil. We finally put hardware cloth underneath, bricks on the side, and hardware cloth on top, to protect it.

Also, Steven had horses, so we made BD 500 with horse manure for a couple of years..

SA: Yeah, we made BD 500 with horse manure. I found it is a considerably more dry than cow manure, so I would add some moisture to it. Then Steiner suggested you wrap some of the parts of mane or tail around it, to bring the horse energy into the process of the horn. I did that for some years, and it seemed to come out fine. In fact, once I took it down to Ruth and I said, "What is this?" She responded, "Well what is it?" I said, "You tell me what it is." She looked at it and she said "500," and I said, "That is what I wanted to know."

One thing I would say is that we have done some experiments over the years. The difficulty with experiments is evaluating your results, and this whole question about evaluating quality with experiments becomes an even bigger question of, "How do you evaluate the result of something that is done differently?"

With that thought, I think we pretty much stick to the mainstream from the books, although we did just do an experiment with 504 in the last couple weeks.

MH: What was that?

SA: Well, you know how you make barrel compound, you line the walls with either wood or brick or what have you and leave the bottom open and you put the manure in? And you put a cover on. We usually make our 504 in clay tiles or pipes and this year we did not have enough. So, I said to Brian, "Wat if we made a pit like the barrel compound and filled it up with nettles? So, we did that, and how much was it?

BW: Forty pounds of wilted nettles pounded into the pit really tight.

MH: So, it is brick lined or cement block-lined and the bottom is open to the earth forces, and then you put cement blocks and soil on top?

BW: Yeah, pavers over the top to cover it and then there was about nine inches of soil on top of that.

SA: So that is one of our experiments that we will dig up next year.



MH: And you have never done that way before?

SA: It was just a thought that popped into my head when we were trying to figure out how to put more in the ground and we did not have the wherewithal to do it the way that we have been doing it.

MH: Had you learned that from anyone or that was just your intuition?

SA: Just a notion that popped into my head, frankly.

MH: Interesting. That is how I do it, actually.

SA: Another thing we do is put the compost preparations in our BD 500 like Alex Podolinsky suggested. He called it “Prepared 500.” The last two or three years, when we take the BD 500 out of the ground we put in the compost preparations.

MH: Is that something that you just learned from learning about prepared BD 500?

SA: Yeah, from Hugh Courtney and Dewane Morgan. I think it originated with Alex Podolinsky.

BW: Yeah, Dewane told us that he had been doing it and we are, “Okay, if Dewane does it we are on board.”

SA: It made sense to me because if we are working with forces, and if you put the compost preparation forces in with the BD 500, wouldn't it have a good effect? There was a discussion about the two different types of forces, wondering whether they might not be compatible. We learned Walter Goldstein's recipe with the barrel compound, and we put stinging nettle in along with the other ingredients – eggshells and basalt. Walter told me that he was given the idea of putting in stinging nettles from Herbert Koepf

When we put the stinging nettle in, the manure rose in the pit from four to five inches, like an angel food cake, and then it settled back down over time. We could definitely see a physical difference when we put the stinging nettle into the barrel compound with all the preparations.

BW: Two and a half pounds of stinging nettle per hundred pounds of manure. This equals approximately three 5-gallon pails full of manure.

SA: Oh yeah, one and one half to two and a half pounds of nettles per about a hundred pounds of manure is the recipe that Walter told me years ago. They came up with the recipe through experimenting with different amounts.

Another small practical thing is that when we do our yarrow, since the stag bladders are kind of prone to falling apart because they are so thin, we usually put each stag bladder in a net bag when we hung them in the sun, like the net bag you might get with lemons or onions from the store. When we would hang the stag bladders for the summer we would build a wire cage from chicken wire around the stag bladders so the birds could not get at the stag bladders to peck and eat them. We hang it in the net bag in the sun for the summer and then bury the stuffed bladder in the net bag in the ground in the fall around Michaelmas time. We find that it is easier to get them out of the ground and not have them fall apart right away while we are trying to dig them out.

BW: We have found that it is not necessary to put net bags around the chamomile, the intestines seem to hold their integrity a little more strongly than the stag bladder. Another thing we learned last year, when we accidentally turned the skulls upside down when we put them in the water or the muck. As the water rose during the winter, it floated the plugs in the cow skulls out and the oak bark flowed out of the skulls. We had about seven skulls and put about a quart of oak bark in each one and we ended up with maybe two quarts of BD 506 when we dug them out in the spring. Normally we would have had seven quarts of the Oak Bark prep. We

sent a sample to Petra Zinniker to do a chromatogram on them; we will see how those turn out. You make compost preparations for fifteen years and you forget one little thing like putting the cow skulls in right side up and the whole year's preparation is gone, poof.

MH: Well, that kind of leads into the next question which is, *what are the biggest challenges you face as a preparation maker and which preparation is the greatest challenge for you?* Would you put that into your category of challenges, making 505?

SA: 505 has been one of our most difficult ones, but I think the real reason we find it more difficult is that we have to obtain fresh skulls and we are not having animals slaughtered regularly. It is easier to do all the other preparations in one day when we have people come, because we can get all of the ingredients and have them all set. The skulls are a little trickier to make sure that we have them on that day, that we get the timing right. So then that preparation tends to get put off and then we have to make a special time to do it, usually a little bit later into October, which is our usual month for doing fall preparations. Is that right Brian?

BW: Yeah. The greatest challenge is the getting the skulls. Mad cow disease made it very difficult for years for slaughterhouses to let them go. Right now I have a good relationship with a local slaughterhouse that is about thirty-five miles down the road and he is willing to help. I call him up and ask, "Can I get some cow skulls? He says, "How many do you want?" "Seven." I say. He says, "Okay, when do you want to pick them up? They will be ready to pick up Thursday." I would rate skulls as number one and stag bladders would be the number two as the most difficult to obtain. Stag bladder availability varies from year to year because we get them from local hunters. Some years we will get two or three and other years we will get six or eight. In Wisconsin deer hunting is a social event. I am most successful in getting stag bladders when I am talking to the hunters beforehand and ask them to save the stag bladders for us. But the biggest challenge for me, I would say, would be the dandelion preparation. I am still not clear about the mesentery versus the peritoneum. I am pretty okay on which is the inside and outside because if I can touch it to my cheek, I can start to feel the difference between the inside and outside. This is also a challenge, and I would say the dandelion preparation is the one that we have probably have the most issues with year in and year out. We just keep learning.

SA: We've had pretty mixed results with the dandelion preparation over the years in terms of how it comes out, and we are wondering if it is because sometimes we get the inside outside and vice versa.

BW: Then, for two years or so the moles got them. That one has been a challenge for us. So, I would say dandelion for me and Steve would probably say oak bark.

MH: Do you think it is a challenge because it does not break down all the way? Or when you say you are not sure if it is the inside or the outside, so when it comes out is it...?

BW: All of those. We have had it come out smelling really...

SA: Sewer.

BW: ...unpleasant. Yeah, and judging by the smell, we are like, "This does not seem like it has gone in the right direction."

MH: Do you hang the mesentery in a tree before burying it, or do you just take a fresh mesentery in the fall and make the preparation?

BW: Fresh mesentery in the fall. We are striving to hang it in the tree, but we did not get it done this year. We are blessed to have a lot of dandelions here. We picked twelve paper grocery bags full of dandelions. Each one is about a ten to twelve pounds of dandelions that will dry down to about one pound of dry dandelions, so we



ended up with about twelve to thirteen pounds of dry dandelions this year. And we shipped half of them to people in California that do not have dandelions. So, we have plenty of dandelions, but the mesentery has been our challenge.

SA: Our mesenteries are actually frozen, then we take them out and use them in the fall. I am not sure if that makes a difference or not.

BW: I just found a local on-farm processor. I can go along with him and I will help him at a farm to do whatever animal he is doing, then he gives me access to his gut barrels, and I can get just about anything I want. So, this year we were able to get pretty fresh stuff as far as the mesentery. The week of or the week before we are going to have our preparation making gathering.

SA: Neither of us are cow farmers so we do not have cows that we slaughter. That could be one of our greatest weaknesses I would reckon.

MH: So, let's see, the next question is, *has your work with the preparations changed your prospective in life and if so how?*

BW: When I talk about biodynamics I always talk about the unseen world, and we work with the unseen world all the time with the preparations. It has become more common or natural in my thinking and, when I go out into the ~~regular~~ world, I think that way about other unseen forces at work. That is a different prospective than most people work with. I think the preparations have made me conscious of that. In other parts of my life, I look for that also, so it has changed my perspective in the sense that I see that it is not just a material world. Most people seem to have values they work through and it makes me think, "Okay, so this is happening, but underneath it, or what created it, was something that was unseen." So, I am always looking for a different insight in all parts of my life, as I have learned to do through the biodynamic preparations.

SA: It would be pretty difficult for me to separate the preparations, or even biodynamics as a whole, from how I have been affected by working with anthroposophy as a whole, insofar as I have done that. Biodynamics definitely led me into anthroposophy. I remember being with Walter Goldstein in one of the early years and asking him the question, "Where did this come from, how did Rudolph Steiner get that?" He looked at me and he said, "He was clairvoyant." I said, "That is where it came from? I had no idea, not a clue." Then he showed me the *Agriculture* lecture book and I said, "Gee, I need to read this," and he said, "Don't try to read it alone, get some other people to read it with you. That is why I organized the study group through Pleasant Ridge. I thought, "Oh, I have got a Waldorf school here. If I put a notice out in the newsletter, there is surely someone in this Waldorf community that will be interested in studying this book." Sure enough, we got about five or six people. So, biodynamics led me into anthroposophy in a more general way and then we had other anthroposophical speakers that would come to the school. So, for me biodynamics is absolutely not at all separate from anthroposophy, it is really part and parcel. Everything I try to understand about the preparations comes out of anthroposophy for me. So, to answer your question have I changed, the answer is "Oh yeah," but I could not directly or only attribute it to working with the preparations except that biodynamics is the only anthroposophical endeavor I know where you can go right out and do tomorrow what you hear people say today. You can read about making a preparation or using a preparation and go right out and do it. It is not quite that simple with most of the other anthroposophical endeavors. It takes a bit more work, a bit more study, a bit more practice. biodynamic farmers are the ones that, as soon as they hear something they want to go right out and try it. I think Brian touched on it quite strongly. I never felt before like I had a real clear sense of the difference between what I would call materialistic thinking and non-materialistic thinking, or materialistic assumptions and non-materialistic assumptions and it has totally changed the way I think of reality or existence. That has changed dramatically.

Last year, they asked Brian and I to come and talk to one of the agriculture classes at the Waldorf High School about biodynamics. Because I knew they were going to take the students to the Monsanto Laboratory to talk about what Monsanto does (because they are trying to cover everything, and let the students make up their own minds, which is good), I said to the students, “If you are thinking about genetics the question is, is a cow a cow because it has cow genetics or does the cow have cow genes because it is a cow? Which comes first, the genes or the creature or the spirit of the creature? They think that an animal or a living organism is like a bunch of Legos. If you do not like the way the Legos are put together, you disassemble them and turn them into something else. That is the way they think of genetics and the way I think of it is the organism has an integrity that it wants to bring into the physical world and make use of the genetics in the physical world to be able to bring itself into the world.” I throw that out as an example of how my perspective on things has changed.

BW: I would concur with what Steven said about anthroposophy and out of that how one’s perspective changes.

MH: Wow, that was a great answer. All right, so I am going to move along here. *What advice would you offer to new preparations makers?*

SA: Ideally, find an experienced preparation maker and go there. That is probably the best advice I could offer. Find a group that is ~~doing~~ making them if you can. If you are isolated, then you better make some connections. I think learning in person is really important, even if you can only manage it over the telephone. I confess that I am not big on computers and all the rest. I use them some, but technology is not my favorite thing. So, make personal contact with other people making preparations if there is any way you can do it.

BW: I would agree. I would add go to as many different preparation makers as you can. Everybody talks about how they get one chance to make preparations in a year. Dewane Morgan always talks about that. When we went to Ruth’s, we would get two opportunities a year, we would do ours and we would do Ruth’s. If there was someone making BD preparations closer, we could actually get in three experiences every year of preparation making. So I would agree with Steven and then I would just add go where other people are making preparations and experience what they are doing.

MH: Okay, that said, *what social relationships have you developed as a preparation maker?*

BW: We were brought in with Ruth’s fall preparation making where she would have anywhere from seventy-five to 125 people come and make preparations. It was more of a social event and they would have big bonfires, stuff like that, so that was part of it. The Oregon Group, in my opinion, does a really good job of recording the quality and what the preparations look like and the evaluation. They do a much better job of bringing people where they actually are serious about assessing the quality. In Viroqua, we did that a couple times when we knew who was coming that was interested and we would do some quality evaluations. But I think it is very important to have the meal and it gives time for a special thing that you look forward to spring and fall, you know that it is going to happen, so it becomes a habit. “When are you doing the preparations?” Or, “I can make it over,” that type of thing. We do it as a tradition, something that starts to create the habit. I think that brings strength from the etheric world and when you do that it helps everyone. So, socially, have an event and have food and do the work and combine them in a fun way. We do not have the arts in there, but Ruth had people who would bring instruments and we would sing.

SA: Over the years the number of people who come to our gatherings has varied. Some years we have had as many as twenty-five or thirty and other years we have just a handful of people. It does not always matter how many people show up in terms of our sense of the quality of the gathering. We had some very small groups of people who were really interested in what we were doing and in experiencing it and learning, and we sat around and put the preparations together. People asked questions and we talked about the different preparations or

things about making them. In a way it is less about the number of people, although practically speaking it is nice to have enough people to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish and how much you are trying to do. But in terms of the quality of interactions, it really depends -- the attitude that we bring, Brian and I, and then the attitude that the people who show up bring, makes a huge difference in how the day goes. Brian is right about the meal; we always try to follow it with a meal. Not everyone is going to stay for that, but those who do feel like that really strengthens the social relationships quite strongly and really makes a difference.

MH: Brian, I should ask what led you into the fellowship of preparation makers because that I think goes along with that.

BW: We have a gentleman here, Mark Shepard, who went to the first two meetings of the Preparation Makers in Copake, New York and he would talk about it, so I always that the preparation making conferences started in 2002, something like that. Then over the years I would always talk to Hugh Courtney and Dewane Morgan. I cannot remember the moment that I decided that I wanted to be part of that group. I really became involved in 2007 when they were looking for a site to have the Fellowship of Preparation Makers conference and somebody suggested maybe Viroqua would host it. They called and asked if we would you host it and I said yes, and we will take care of all of the financial responsibility, and we get to invite who we want to invite. Up to that time you had to be an experienced preparation maker to go and that was kind of off-putting to some of us.

So, when 2007 came, I tried to get speakers who all should be in the same room working together. Then, I was on a conference call with Harold Hoven and Hugh Courtney, maybe Dewane but at least those two, and I said, "Who could we get to facilitate this, this bringing of conflicts together in the movement?" And Hugh and Harold both said Wali Via. I did not know Wali but I said okay, I will call Wali. I called Wali and he explained how busy he was, and that he could not come to Wisconsin. Then I explained what we were trying to do and he called me back the next day and said, "I will come to Wisconsin for you." That was probably when I really stepped in both feet into the Fellowship, because of the integrity and the willingness to work through conflict and work with different points of view. It is one of the few places in my life that everybody in the group holds those values, and it is really one of the best groups that I belong to. I value the way we work together. So, probably 2007 is when I really stepped in fully, feet first.

MH: Well I have goosebumps, that is really neat to hear. Now, ***what do you as preparation makers in your vicinity need to meet the demands for preparations in your area?***

BW: The demand for biodynamic preparations in our area is very small. We make more preparations than we use, even in our regional area we do not have that many biodynamic preparation users. This is 2018 and everybody talks about how biodynamics is getting bigger and there is more interest in it, that it is growing and growing. I do not see that to be true. There are a couple of areas that are getting an increase, wine and possibly hemp or cannabis, but in the real food production area, I do not see any growth. Increasing the production of biodynamic vegetables and other foods is our challenge. We really need to find a way to help the food farmers to be economically successful and get the food out into the world which would be helpful for everybody.

BW: So, our group has a goal of having a gallon of each compost pile preparations in storage after we dig them up in the fall. The valerian, we would like to have two quarts and we probably have only one quart now. The chamomile and the stinging nettle, we have a gallon of each. We are also continually trying to build up the supply of all the compost pile preparations. So, if there is "an actual demand for it" in other than just those two areas I mentioned, we would be able to help supply people across the country. And, we would like to see biodynamic practices increase in our region. The biggest user in our region is a cranberry grower.

SA: And the orchard people. There is also a long time, organic orchard, which has just gotten certified by Demeter in the last what, two years.

BW: So those are the two biggest users in our immediate region that we help by providing them with preparations. Most of the other people that we supply preparations to are basically home gardeners.

SA: Just to put things in perspective, we are in Vernon County, Wisconsin, and in Vernon County at least -- I do not know if this will change -- has the highest per capita number of organic farms of any county in the country. And we are still outnumbered by conventional farms, by a long way, and that is just organic to conventional to say nothing of biodynamics. So, we have to keep these things in perspective. We are like the homeopathic dose that everyone is hoping is going to change the world.

BW: Microscopic in numbers.

**MH: How many biodynamic farms that you know of are in your area?**

SA: I have a problem with the term “farms” because I am never quite sure what that term implies. I like the term “agriculturalists” because it seems a lot broader and more inclusive. So there are the orchard people, and there is the cranberry growing region -- I do not know how far that is from us, about sixty or seventy miles. One of the cranberry growing organizations became really interested in biodynamics about, again, three four years ago, so they have been using preparations since that time and are really quite serious about working with that. Other than that, in our area, it is mostly small farms and gardens, you know more about it than I do Brian.

BW: I used to do eight to twelve acres of vegetables, and now I am down to an acre and a half to two acres. Now I stir preparations for two to three other farms that are vegetable people, so they get preparations on their land. That is kind of the extent of our use here. We have one beef farm that does the compost piles, so she uses about a pint of each of the compost preparations every year.

BW: The beef farm has seen significant results when they put the compost pile preparations in-

SA: So that is kind of where we are at. We do not have that many farmers. Over to in East Troy, Wisconsin, there are a couple farms working with biodynamics in the beef industry, vegetables, and flowers.

BW: There is a university in Fairfield, Iowa, Maharishi University. They are Demeter certified and they teach biodynamics, but there are not a lot of ongoing agricultural enterprises that are doing biodynamics in that area other than the university. We have more biodynamic preparations than all these places could use.

SA: There is the relationship between biodynamic agriculture and organic agriculture. A lot of organic people are not really very prepared to make that leap to biodynamics. I think it is hard enough for people to keep up being organic. And then when you add biodynamics you are adding some more things in terms of the practical work you have to do. I think it is challenging for people quite honestly.

MH: Yup. It sounds like a good educational opportunity. Brian, I am just going to bring this up because I do not know the status of this. You were trying to organize a group of growers and become more biodynamic to market biodynamics? Let's add that.

BW: We have a lot of Amish in our area and a lot of them are vegetable growers. Two of them are actively applying some level of preparations on their land. And I have another “English” guy that has about fifteen acres of vegetables. I am trying to create a group that I can apply the preparations with, to make sure they all get on their land until they start to see results and they become more committed. It is kind of a shepherding period right now.

MH: And your goal is to market it as biodynamic.

BW: Right.

MH: So, you are trying to move in that direction, but it is early days yet. That sounds really good. I am surprised actually the Amish have not taken on biodynamics more.

BW: Yep, it fits them. The teacher at Maharishi University, Dr. Thim, is from India. In India, they used to bury three thousand horns with the group he worked with. He said they could not get the Indian farmers interested in organics or biodynamics until he introduced biodynamics as “economical farming.” He said then they could not find rooms big enough to hold meetings because of all the farmers who were interested in “economical farming” which was really biodynamic farming. Because you make your own fertilization, you make your own preparations, you do not have to buy anything. That was right up their alley. The Amish are much the same way, so we will see if we get a little more interest in biodynamics in the Amish community.

MH: Okay, so into the next question. ***Would collegial sharing with other preparation makers be of interest to you beyond this interview, and if so, how can we help you to develop relationships with other preparation makers?***

SA: I am not exactly sure in practical terms what you are asking?

MH: Well, I think that you sort of already answered it in the previous question, that it comes out of the group itself. For example, in Oregon we do not always have enough of certain preparations to go around and we have to recommend that people buy from JPI. This may be more specific to areas that have a higher demand, because it sounds like you all have more than enough to go.

SA: Well, as long as we have a good year.

BW: Yeah.

SA: It was not that long ago I had to go to Petra and Mark Zinniker and ask them for some stinging nettle, so...

BW: So, my answer is, yes we are interested, and, yes, we would be happy to be on some kind of call list, database, contact group of people that needed more preparations. If you are asking us to give you an inventory of what preparations we have, we would be happy to do that so that people around the country who need them could go to a place like the Fellowship and say, “Where do I get these preparations my region?” and the Fellowship would have a list of places like us that could provide them. So, yes, we would be interested in working across the country with other preparation makers.

SA: And that could be a whole other project in itself.

BW: Yeah.

MH: So, let’s see, this is kind of a big question. ***Do you have a vision for the future of preparation makers in North America?***

BW: When you say “future,” I have been looking at twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, not just the next three years or five years, and that would be a support of biodynamics from both retail growers and home gardeners. I think we move forward when people realize their food has less and less vitality in it. More and more people are thinking about how to grow their own food and, so, as that movement comes back where people want higher quality food and they start to grow their own little buckets, patios, backyard gardens. I would like biodynamics to be right in the thick of that, providing education and preparations to increase the quality of the food. That is



one picture. Another picture would be dairy farms and the respect for the cow that happens with smaller herds instead of the big, large herds. Farms where the cows are really respected for what they bring to the fertility and revitalization of the earth. So, smaller, more regional, dairy farms would be another thing in biodynamics. Having grass-based dairies increase and using the preparations, regional farms across the country. I would want a picture of what the demand for preparations would be, then I would like to have regional groups of preparation makers – twenty, thirty, forty people getting together in an area northeast to southwest, wherever it is, and they all make preparations. That means there would be lots of regional gatherings, maybe twelve to fifteen of them across the country, where you could go and learn about preparation making and you would exchange information. There would be communication between preparation makers, there would be this fraternity or family or whatever it is or a free association. People share information about preparation making and they help other people make quality preparations. Big picture, but that is like I say, a long time down the road.

SA: I guess I do not really have anything to add to that. This is more Brian's area than mine at the moment.

MH: Okay, maybe you answered this, but *what steps can or should be taken to make understanding and use of the preparations more accessible to the world?* So perhaps in your area, how would you make that more accessible to, say, the Amish farmers or the bigger farms?

BW: Read that again so I can think about that please.

SA: That seems like a fairly challenging question in some ways, because of what I was mentioning before about the difference between materialistic thinking and non-materialistic thinking. It almost seems like, in one respect at least, that would be the barrier you have to address. It is almost addressing how people understand the world. I am not really sure how to go about that, that is a really challenging one in my perspective.

BW: I would say the world would have to change and we could support the change. I do not think the world is going to change because of biodynamics. I do not know if that makes sense or not.

SA: Unless we can do what Rudolph Steiner said and get more and more people eating biodynamic foods so that they can think more spiritually. Maybe the answer is that we need to get more biodynamic food into the marketplace ultimately.

BW: Read it one more time and see if we can come up with anything.

MH: Okay, so what steps can or should be taken to make the understanding and use of the preparations more accessible to the world? Maybe think in terms of, if you were to start small, how could you get those around you, maybe at a grassroots level, to understand and use the preparations?

SA: I would say educate your local people that eat your food. I think the CSAs have an incredible opportunity to always put information about biodynamics into their boxes. I guess it would be to educate locally so people can actually taste and see the difference in the food. Then, if we do that for twenty years, there will be a long history of people knowing biodynamic food is just so much better. So, I guess the answer would be get as much food in the people that is grown biodynamically that is different so people can experience the quality of biodynamic food.

MH: Okay, so we are at the end here. I have one optional question. The optional question is, *which preparation is your favorite to make?*

SA: Favorite to make?



BW: 500, because it is such a social thing, and it is so simple to do. People enjoy doing it and seeing the horns filled up. They like to see the wheelbarrow fill up with all the cow horns. My favorite one is probably the stag bladder because it takes so long to get everything together. Our flowers come in August, so we are not able to use fresh flowers. We have to pick the flowers, save them, get the stag bladders, hang them, take them off, and put them in the ground. It is a year and a half process, and I have always liked that. The stag bladder is my favorite one.

SA: That is a really hard question for me to answer. I think I could more easily answer the question which one I enjoy using the most, but I would probably say stinging nettle. I have always had a fondness for stinging nettle just as a plant and...

MH: Me too.

SA: Long before I ever heard of biodynamics, I remember hearing more than one herbalist say that they felt stinging nettle was one of the most important herbal plants they knew, and I grew up with stinging nettle. As a child, I used to work my way into stinging nettle patches and make forts because it was such a cool place to go. So, I like to try to find the stinging nettle. I was quite thrilled when I read what Rudolph Steiner said about it and knowing that it was one of the preparation plants. I think of stinging nettle the center of the compost preparations, in a certain sense. In terms of making, that would be my favorite.

BW: Yeah, socially cow horns, stag bladders most favorite. Same way, I would do stinging nettle.

MH: And so, then I guess I should ask you then which is your favorite one to use?

SA: Well, that is the question I would ask someone. My favorite preparation is valerian. I love the valerian preparation. I put it in just about everything all the time. I mix it with all kinds of other preparations. There is something about valerian that I just cannot think that there could be anything bad about using more. I am really attracted to the valerian preparation.

MH: Well, and Brian?

BW: When I spray 500 late in the day and I am tired at the end of the day. Then you do silica in the morning. The sun's coming up, if it is sunshiny. You have this mist dripping over a plant, and it is just this really casual stroll through the field watching this drip down. I enjoy that more than spraying 500 in the evening.

MH: Okay, well, we are at the end of the interview and I want to say thank you to both of you. This was really very interesting for me and really difficult for me to not make it a conversation. In closing, *is there anything else aside from that that you feel like you want to say?*

SA: We haven't talked about equisetum at all today, and that is always one that we have put in a lot of our sprays whether it is 500, barrel compound spraying, or silica. Equisetum seems to be one that gets added to just about everything we spray.

BW: No, nothing else that comes to mind. This has been an interesting interview for sure.

SA: Yeah, we appreciate the work.

MH: Absolutely, yup.

BW: All right, thank you Marjory.