

Interview and reflections on the achievements of Kenneth McAlister MD

“What is really at the core of Hesperus' mission is to explore, develop and support what is truly human. It's like the snowflake. Each snowflake is the same - and different. And that's also the case with human beings. Each of us has our own path. With the vagaries of life, the individual can very often be suppressed or wounded to the point where the sense of meaning in life - the thread of the biography - is lost. We are very committed to trying to help ourselves, and those who come to us for care, to find that thread again. And it's a mystery really, how each of us does that. And through the various modalities we have, we try to support the individual in the journey, and to help them somehow to reconnect, to deepen the connection with their biography, so that life becomes precious again, not just a waiting, but a precious adventure of becoming more human.” Kenneth McAlister from the Hesperus video. [Link](#).

Is the above quote why you came to Hesperus in 1990 or has this philosophy evolved over time?

“I’m not sure I could speak like that when I first came to Hesperus. In 1990 I was five years into learning medicine on the front line as a country GP in Bobcaygeon, ON. In many ways it was a good time in my life and probably I was working through some issues arising from my Egyptian incarnation. The best part was that I met Nedi there. Otherwise I was pretty isolated from more conscious spiritual community that I had initially pursued medical training to support. I remember one of my mentors, Francis Edmunds, looking intently into a group of young people of which I was a part and saying, “When I come back I’ll be asking you: where are your communities!” This somehow impacted me deeply, as he had just given a talk about the need to create “islands of culture” to maintain and cultivate what is human in us. My desire for community transformed from a vague tribal notion living under the banner words of peace and love, to a more clear sense of intentional community that would collaboratively nurture individuals and the Earth, with professionalism that bridges contemporary practice with an Anthroposophic world view. That’s a wordy way of saying that after I discovered what was important to me, I could wade into life to earn the tools I needed to get to work. In any case, many years later a call came about the dire needs Hesperus had, and am I going to come or not!”

Is anthroposophy at the core of your philosophy on ‘ageing well’ - on care? Could you explain, briefly, how anthroposophy has contributed to your way of working in the world?

“For me Anthroposophy is really a friend in the spiritual world who is nurturing, ever present, and seeks to help us become more aware of the mystery, the great gift of being human, and asks that we be ever more consciously creative as we awaken to this deep and gentle resource residing in us all. I am still very much a work in progress, a play in progress, but I am learning through Anthroposophy that life isn’t so much about what goes on inside me, but rather what lives and moves between us, between us and the Kingdoms of Nature, between us and the Kingdoms of the Spiritual World. Movement, growth, insight comes through relationship at all these levels.”

Kenneth you have truly helped to create an “island of culture” and I know there is much gratitude living in the community for all the time and energy you have given to Hesperus Village. I know you will continue to be an active community member and we look forward to your future contributions, whatever form that may take. Vibeke Ball

At the Hesperus AGM on November 18th Kenneth was presented with a book. Sybille writes “I hope this book and it’s outpouring of gratitude and well-wishes from many in the community helps to confirm the worthiness of the love, time and effort you allocated to this part of your life. This place truly is a 'finishing school' - all of us struggling to progress and / or survive and possibly thrive. How can one not learn and grow in such rich soil?”

Below are two pages written by Sybille Hahn for the introduction to Kenneth’s book.

The Myth: Once upon a good time when minstrels and seekers re-emerged from a distant past, a young lad grew up as one of five brothers. They were a competitive lot. There was much jockeying for position and favour. Their forefathers came from theological and academic stock. Three boys easily fit into moulds bound for prosperity. Two had a more idealistic and philosophic bent.

As common in those years, in their student days, these two grew their locks to the shoulder and they danced with maidens in flowing gowns and flower crowns. It was said that even the odd mushroom passed their lips. The world beckoned and young Kenneth yielded to the call of the open road. Well acquainted with winter winds, his feet turned south and south again until the soft Spanish loving tongue enchanted his heart. He remained some time under the Southern Cross and traversed in the foot prints of cougars and alpacas.

Stories reached him about a fellowship community back in the distant North where one might practice good work and contemplation, pondering the words of Rudolf Steiner. Kenneth betook himself there to the enchanting settlements of Spring Valley and Chestnut Ridge. Along Hungry Hollow Road, in The Fellowship Community he met the healer, Dr. Paul Scharff.

While mixing biodynamic preparations, working on Threefold Farm and in the Fellowship Centre, the desire to become a healer himself grew and Kenneth returned to his home ground to undertake medical studies and training. In time, his formal training concluded, he addressed himself to the practical work of studying human beings, their stages and their conditions. He sought to serve, young and old while experiencing all aspects of personal life, some greatly fulfilling and some disappointing.

Among Kenneth’s significant undertakings was taking up the leadership of Hesperus, a life’s finishing school. It was teetering on failure and with patience, his steadfast vision brought it to stability. In time, Hesperus Village grew and flowered into a model environment for saging, for people to grow in body, spirit, wisdom and love; - truly a grand enterprise!

The Professional Man & his biography: Kenneth Russell McAlister, BA. MD., was born in Windsor Ontario on July 6, 1949. He received his Bachelor of Arts from York University in Toronto in 1977 and his Medical Doctorate from the University of Western Ontario in 1982. After completing his postgraduate requirements at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, he worked as a general practitioner in Trail, British Columbia and Bobcaygeon, Ontario.

In 1990, he moved his practice to the Hesperus Fellowship Community of Ontario (incorporated in 1983, opened in September, 1987) where he continues to cultivate a team practice in Anthroposophic medicine. He is a founding and active member in the Ontario Society of Physicians for Complementary Medicine, the Complementary Medical Section of the Ontario

Medical Association and the Canadian Anthroposophic Medical Association. He maintains privileges at York Central Hospital.

Kenneth was elected to the Hesperus Fellowship Community of Ontario board of directors and subsequently to the Executive as President in 1990. For a brief hiatus of almost two years, he stepped out of the presidential role. The pressure of a waitlist in excess of 150 for 19 units led to expansion plans drafted in 2003. These required severance of land and the incorporation of a second corporation, Hesperus Fellowship Village, to qualify for government funding which was granted in 2008. Construction commenced in 2009 reaching completion in September, 2011. Both corporations, as associated charities, operate under the name Hesperus Village.

With the end of the financial year 2014/15, Kenneth stepped away from the presidency and chairmanship on March 31, 2015 and submitted his resignation from the Board effective at the Annual General Meeting of members on November 18, 2015, whose ranks he will join with continued good will and support. His 25 year leadership provided a singular contribution to a truly unique anthroposophic initiative in the Americas that has touched hundreds of lives and will continue to enhance the lives of future generations.