
“Fifty Years of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust”

**A Presentation by
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust
at the Invitation of the
Institute for the Study of the Work of Wilhelm Reich**

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Exactly 50 years ago last month—on March 8, 1957—four days before he was taken to a federal prison, Wilhelm Reich signed his Last Will and Testament. By this time his orgone energy accumulators and many of his publications had already been banned and destroyed by the United States government, starting on June 5, 1956 when three orgone energy accumulators were destroyed outside of Reich’s Student Laboratory at Orgonon in Rangeley, Maine.

Three weeks later, several boxes of his publications were burned outside the Student Laboratory at Orgonon. A month after that, in July, the panels for about fifty orgone accumulators were dismantled in the town of Rangeley, Maine by the local contractors who had built them.

And exactly one month after that—on August 23, 1956—several tons of Reich’s publications, including the titles of 10 hardcover books as well as medical and scientific bulletins and journals, were burned under FDA supervision just three blocks north of here on Gansevoort Street in a municipal Department of Sanitation garbage incinerator that was torn down only a few years ago.

All of which we can only imagine must’ve weighed heavily on Reich on March 8, 1957, four days before he would begin what was to be a two year prison sentence for criminal contempt of court. In the opening paragraph of his Last Will and Testament, Reich wrote:

“I made the consideration of secure transmission to future generations of a vast empire of scientific accomplishments the guide in my last dispositions. To my mind, the foremost task to be fulfilled was to safeguard the truth about my life and work against distortion and slander after my death.”

And to accomplish this task, in his Will he created a Trust, originally known as the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund, so named because of Reich’s belief that the only real solution to eliminating psychological disturbances and their subsequent somatic illnesses was in prevention. And that this prevention was possible only by ensuring what he called “the unspoiled protoplasm” and the “unarmored life” of infants who he called “The Children of the Future.”

But the term itself “Infant Trust Fund” actually appears in one of Reich’s scientific bulletins as early as 1954, where Reich briefly mentions a visit to his daughter Eva who was then practicing medicine on the Maine coast.

During that visit, Reich had stopped in at a bank in the nearby town of Bar Harbor, Maine for advice regarding his will. And writing about this in the July 1954 issue of *CORE* (*Cosmic Orgone Engineering*), he says:

“I met a very kind bank official with whom I left my Will and some documents regarding the transformation of the Wilhelm Reich Foundation into an Infant Trust Fund.”

And, by the way, updating his will was something that Reich did periodically.

In fact, in the book *American Odyssey*, Reich’s letters and journals from 1940 to 1947, there are several references to his will from that period of time. And going back even further to Reich’s diaries and journals from 1934 to 1939—published as the book *Beyond Psychology*—Reich is often expressing concern and wonder about how future generations will view his constantly-evolving scientific legacy.

And so, on March 8, 1957, Reich’s concerns and his practical solutions for transmitting his legacy to future generations after his death, culminated in the signing of this Last Will & Testament.

Four days later—on March 12, 1957—Reich entered the Federal Penitentiary in Danbury, Connecticut. Ten days after that—on March 22nd, two days before his 60th birthday—Reich was transferred to the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania to serve his two-year sentence. Seven-and-a-half months later—on November 3, 1957—he died in the Lewisburg Penitentiary of heart failure and was buried several days later at Orgonon.

In his Last Will & Testament, Reich had named his daughter, Dr. Eva Reich, as the sole Trustee of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund. She was the individual now charged with carrying out Reich’s final wishes as stipulated in his will. And among the will’s principal stipulations was this:

“To operate and maintain the property at Orgonon under the name and style of The Wilhelm Reich Museum.”

And in the will, Reich elaborated on this stipulation, by enumerating some specific responsibilities. He says:

“I have collected all of the pertinent materials, such as instruments which served the Discovery of the Life Energy, the documents which were witnesses to labors of some 30 years the library of a few thousand volumes, collected painstakingly over the same stretch of time, and amply used in my researches and writings.

All of these things and similar things should remain where they are now to preserve some of the atmosphere in which the Discovery of the Life Energy has taken place over the decades. The grounds should be kept neat and clean, and repairs should not be neglected.”

Well before his imprisonment, Reich had stored his Archives in two separate locations in one building:

- In a photographic dark-room on the first floor of the Orgone Energy Observatory, which is the major building at Orgonon, and is now the Museum.
- And in a large closet off of Reich’s study and library on the second floor of the Observatory.

And in his will, immediately after his stipulations about the Museum, Reich begins his discussion about his archives. And this is what he writes:

“In order to enable the future student of the Primordial Cosmic Energy Ocean, the Life Energy discovered and developed by me, to obtain a true picture of my accomplishments, mistakes, wrong assumptions, pioneering basic trends, my private life, my childhood, etc., I hereby direct that under no circumstances and under no pretext whatsoever shall any of the documents, manuscripts or diaries found in my library among the archives, or anywhere else, be altered, omitted, destroyed, added to, or falsified in any other imaginable way. The tendency of man, born from fear, to ‘get along with his fellow man’ at any price, and to hide unpleasant matters is overpoweringly strong.

To guard against this trend, disastrous to historical truth, my study including the library and archives, shall be sealed right after my death by the proper legal authorities and no one shall be permitted to look into my papers until my Trustee, hereinafter-named, is duly-appointed and qualified and takes control and custody thereof.

These documents are of crucial importance to the future of newborn generations. I therefore direct my Trustee and his successors that nothing whatsoever must be changed in any of the documents and that they should be put away and stored for 50 years to secure their safety from destruction and falsification by anyone interested in the falsification and destruction of historical truth.”

What I always find heartbreaking about the will is Reich’s implicit hope that his daughter—with the support of his colleagues and students, and with everyone fueled by a singular vision and resolve—would work together to carry out his final wishes regarding the transmission of his legacy to future generations.

And in that hope Reich was completely mistaken.

Regrettably and understandably, Eva Reich was so emotionally devastated by the tragedy of her father's death that months later, she let it be known that she didn't feel she could assume the awesome responsibilities of the Trusteeship, that someone else had to be found to do this.

Yet no one among Reich's colleagues and students stepped forward to assume the mantle of the Trusteeship and carry out the specifics of Reich's Last Will & Testament. No cohesive group ever assembled after Reich's death to categorically insure the fulfillment of his final wishes, and not someone else's.

That task ultimately fell to a woman, barely 34 years old—a former patient of Dr. Chester Raphael's—a woman who was unwilling to see Reich's historical legacy possibly lost forever and who stepped forward to offer her services.

And that woman was Mary Boyd Higgins who, at the age of 81 is still going strong and with whom I have the pleasure of working at the Trust and the Museum.

And so, in the early months of 1959 during the winter, Mary traveled to rural Rangeley, Maine to visit Reich's 200-plus acre property at Orgonon for the first time. The Student Laboratory and the Orgone Energy Observatory were abandoned, boarded up and vandalized, unattended and unprotected for nearly two years against the harsh New England elements.

Inside the Orgone Energy Observatory, Wilhelm Reich's archives were gone: removed illegally the previous year by Aurora Karrer, the last woman in Reich's life, who had transported the archives hundreds of miles away to the house that she shared with her mother in Bethesda, Maryland.

As I said two years ago in my remarks at the Williams Club, on the occasion of Mary Higgins' 80th birthday, "What a sad and tragic irony, that Wilhelm Reich—truly one of the most original thinkers of the 20th century, or any century—should have his legacy and his wishes so disrespected, so diminished, and so pitifully neglected."

And to make matters worse, when Reich's Last Will and Testament was finally probated and all specific personal bequests were fulfilled, \$823 was all that was left for Mary Higgins to turn this situation around and carry out Reich's final wishes.

Today, that would translate into approximately \$5,700. Less than \$6000 to transform Orgonon from the ruin that it was into the beautiful and vibrant property and Museum that it is today. Less than \$6000 to retrieve and protect Reich's Archives for future generations, according to the dictates of his Will.

Shortly after that first visit to Orgonon, Mary Higgins traveled to Bethesda, Maryland.

And during several face-to-face meetings, Ms. Karrer repeatedly denied that she had these archival materials. Only when Mary Higgins took legal action against her, did Ms. Karrer and her attorney produce suitcase after suitcase after suitcase with these archival materials, which the Court subsequently turned over to the Trust.

But many archival materials were still missing. And the Trust's legal efforts to retrieve additional materials from Ms. Karrer would stretch across over four decades.

In terms of Reich's final wishes to establish a Museum: living in Rangeley was a wonderful gentleman—literally a gentle man—by the name of Tom Ross who for years had been the caretaker at Orgonon while Reich was alive. In fact, for a time he and his wife Bea and their daughter Kathy actually lived in one of the cabins at Orgonon while he was caretaker. The entire Ross family became close friends with Mary Higgins and it was with their assistance, their generosity of time and hard physical work, that in 1960 Mary was able to open Orgonon to the public as The Wilhelm Reich Museum.

Today, Orgonon comprises 175-acres of fields and forests and trails which are open daily to the public

The Orgone Energy Observatory—which had been abandoned, boarded up and vandalized—is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open for tours in the summer and early fall, and by special arrangement throughout the year.

The Student Laboratory—which had also been abandoned and vandalized—is now the Conference Building and also the location of the Museum and Trust offices.

Jumping back now to 1959, the first year of Mary Higgins' tenure as Trustee: a third area of responsibility began to emerge for the Trust, in addition to creating a Museum and safeguarding the archives.

And that third responsibility was re-publishing Reich's books, although publishing was not a specific stipulation in Reich's Last Will & Testament.

And the way it happened was this:

A young scholar named Leo Raditsa—who was interested in Reich's work—approached Roger Straus of Farrar, Straus & Giroux which, at the time, was a flourishing 13-year old New York publishing house. In 1959, there was still considerable interest in Reich's work, but it was difficult or impossible for people to find copies of Reich's books—except maybe in second-hand bookstores—since a 1954 Court Injunction had banned Reich from distributing them. And since tons of Reich's books, from his Orgone Institute Press here in Greenwich Village, had been burned in 1956.

Raditsa explained to Straus that perhaps there was an audience for these books. And he wondered if Straus might explore the possibility of bringing them back into print.

The result of this was a wonderful and productive 45-year professional relationship between Roger Straus and Mary Higgins, as well as a genuine personal friendship, during which time all of Reich's hardcover books were re-published and several new titles were brought out. Starting in 1960 with the publication of *Selected Writings - An Introduction to Orgonomy*.

The concept of this book was actually Roger Straus's who felt that an anthology of excerpts from Reich's books might be the best way to introduce his work to a broader, more mainstream audience.

This was followed by the publication of *The Function of the Orgasm* in 1961, *The Sexual Revolution* in 1962, *Character Analysis* in 1963, *Listen Little Man* in 1965, *The Murder of Christ* in 1966. And in 1967, an entirely new book entitled *Reich Speaks of Freud*, which was published over the vehement objections of Dr. Kurt Eissler of the Freud Archives.

At the time of Mr. Straus's death in May 2004 at the age of 87, Farrar, Straus & Giroux had published 21 titles by Reich, including three volumes of his diaries and journals, and the correspondence between Reich and A.S. Neill. And because of the publishing house's strong international presence, Reich's books now appear in over 21 languages.

What I find so moving about Mr. Straus's relationship with the Trust is this: he was the first to admit that he had no great personal interest nor understanding of Reich's work, and that his decision to publish Reich's books was because of his sense of outrage and his need to take a principled stance against book-burning in America.

Roger Straus is truly one of the unsung heroes in transmitting Reich's legacy to future generations, first as a publisher and secondly as the individual who brought The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust to the attention of the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard University, one of the world's premier medical libraries.

For years after Mary Higgins had legally retrieved the bulk of Reich's Archives from Aurora Karrer, she kept these materials at her home in Forest Hills, New York where she lived up until about five years ago. And during this time, she visited several institutions, looking for a permanent repository for these materials, including the Library of Congress and several university libraries.

Meanwhile, Roger Straus contacted someone that he knew: a man named Richard Wolfe, the Chief Librarian of the "Rare Books and Special Collections" at Harvard's Countway Library. Mr. Wolfe felt that Reich's legacy was an important one and that these archives would be a welcome addition to the library's other collections.

And so, in October 1973 an agreement was signed between the Trust and the Countway whereby Reich's archival materials would be periodically given to the Countway Library over the years, to be stored in their Rare Books and Special Collections with the Trust retaining all copyright title and publishing rights.

Today at the Countway Library, Reich's archives are kept in a temperature-controlled environment in the "Rare Books and Special Collections" which was recently renamed, and is now known as "The Center for the History of Medicine."

Reich's archives comprise well over 200 archive boxes of materials. Each archive box measures 15" by 12" by 4". These materials include:

- Correspondence
- Microscopic, scientific and personal films
- Original manuscripts, both published and unpublished
- Microscope slides
- Personal files, including diaries and journals
- Photographs
- Organizational materials, such as documents from the Orgone Institute Press, the Orgonomic Infant Research Center, the Wilhelm Reich Foundation, and other entities
- Work development papers and laboratory protocols
- Plus William Steig's original drawings for *Listen Little Man*

And starting in November of this year—50 years after Reich's death—these archives will be accessible to scholars and researchers.

So these have been the major responsibilities and accomplishments of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust:

- Reich's archives, now at Harvard
- The publishing of Reich's books in New York City
- and the Museum in Rangeley where our bookstore carries the largest assortment of Reich's publications available anywhere, including our own reprints of his research bulletins and journals.

Today, well over 7000 pages of Reich's own writings are publicly available.

But 50 years after Reich's death, all of these achievements continue to be overshadowed by the chilling effect of a 1954 Complaint for Injunction declaring that orgone energy is non-existent, overshadowed by the chilling effect of a 1954 Decree of Injunction which ordered the destruction of orgone energy accumulators and many of Reich's publications, a chilling effect that essentially put an end to Reich's medical and natural scientific research in this country 50 years ago.

And the result 50 years later in 2007?

The same slanders and distortions and misrepresentations about Reich's work in books, magazines and across the Internet. And only scattered progress in Reich's medical and natural scientific research here in the United States of America.

Here in Reich's adopted country—the home of Orgonon, The Wilhelm Reich Museum and The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust—Reich is completely dismissed and maligned by the traditional medical and scientific communities.

And while we should take great consolation that orgone therapy survives and thrives and is continually being nourished, as we'll be seeing in today's presentations, equal attention and effort need to be devoted to Reich's medical and natural scientific legacy, regarding practical applications of orgone energy.

I sometimes hear people say, "Oh, it's just a matter of time before the scientific and medical communities recognize Reich's contributions." Which is a statement I don't accept. I don't believe it's good enough for anyone who professes an interest in Reich's legacy to simply say these changes will inevitably happen, without trying to develop or at least imagine exactly how and when and by whom these changes might happen. Which means we need to continually ask ourselves the right questions.

For example: Where today—if anywhere—are the young biologists, chemists, medical students, physicians and researchers who are reading primary materials written by Reich, such as:

- *The Bion Experiments on the Origins of Life*
- *Bion Experiments on the Cancer Problem*
- *The Cancer Biopathy*
- The medical case-studies from the *Orgone Energy Bulletins*
- And Reich's contemporaneous journal entries as compiled in *Beyond Psychology* and *American Odyssey*.

Where today—if anywhere---are the young physicists and scientists who are reading:

- *The Oranur Experiment*
- *Cosmic Superimposition*
- the *Cosmic Orgone Engineering* bulletins
- and *Orgonomic Functionalism*

And today, how many young students, therapists, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists are actually reading:

- Reich's *Early Writings*
- *Character Analysis*
- *Genitality*
- *The Function of the Orgasm*
- *Reich Speaks of Freud*
-

How many of them are listening to the hours of available CDs of Reich himself discussing therapeutic issues and techniques with his orgone therapists?

So today—50 years after Reich’s death in prison and over 50 years since his books were banned and burned in this country—if today individuals from these disciplines are ignoring the thousands of pages of primary materials that the Trust has made publicly available for decades, then how and when and by whom can we ever expect significant intellectually-honest practical applications in all areas of Reich’s work to take root in this country?

In the past three years, much to my complete horror, I’ve discovered that my responsibilities at the Trust and Museum involve a huge amount of writing, preceded at times by an inordinate amount of thinking, neither of which are my favorite activities and both which I find quite painful.

But whenever I’m working, I find myself continually drawing upon my professional experience as a writer, a filmmaker and a college teacher in devising specific tools and strategies and language and imagery for reaching out and trying to attract a wider audience to Reich’s legacy. An audience where hopefully we might find individuals to join and support and finance our unending efforts to preserve Reich’s historic legacy. An audience where hopefully we might find individuals to promote and engage in more real-world applications of Reich’s legacy.

And in trying to devise new tools and strategies and language and imagery, I find myself continually asking the following question:

“What are the basic themes and storylines and real-world applications of Reich’s legacy that might be of interest to a broader audience beyond the confines of what is essentially a small and loosely-defined community of people interested in Reich?”

The answers for each of us, of course, will vary.

For me personally, I re-discovered a phrase last year that in my own mind helped me to clarify and to frame some of the basic themes and storylines of Reich’s life and work.

It’s from the famous Matthew Arnold poem “*Dover Beach*” which Arnold wrote in 1851, shortly after he was married. And it’s clear that Arnold is addressing his wife in this poem. This is what he writes to her:

“...Let us be true to one another,
For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.”

And while I don’t completely subscribe to Arnold’s dismal world-view, in a world where there truly is very little certitude and very little peace, “help for pain” is precisely what Reich was providing and continually striving for.

As a medical student, physician, and young psychoanalyst, “help for pain” was the basis for all of his work.

As a revolutionary social activist, as a public speaker and as a founder of hygiene clinics for the working classes of Austria and Germany, he provided “help for pain” on a massive scale.

“Help for pain” was his underlying purpose for rejecting Freud’s “death instinct” as an excuse for the frequent failures of psychoanalytic techniques, and for going on to develop more effective therapeutic methods.

His laboratory experiments with the bions and the T-Bacilli and their effects on the cancer cell; the Reich Blood Tests as a diagnostic tool for identifying the cancer process prior to the formation of tumors; his experimental medical use of the orgone accumulator on terminal cancer patients and people with other diseases; exploring the potential effects of orgone energy on nuclear radiation-sickness in the Oranur Experiment; his invention of the cloudbuster and the DORbuster: all of these were practical applications to provide “help for pain.”

And “help for pain” was certainly Reich’s guiding principle when he drew up his Last Will and Testament, and when he signed it 50 years ago last month on March 8, 1957 and created The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Fund to transmit his legacy to future generations and to safeguard the truth about his life and work against distortion and slander after his death.

*Kevin Hinchey
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