

**SEPTEMBER 2006 UPDATE
FROM
THE WILHELM REICH INFANT TRUST
& THE WILHELM REICH MUSEUM**

We thank you for your interest and support. For those of you new to this list, we assure you that none of the names on this e-mail list—nor the names of Museum visitors, conference attendees, or our bookstore customers—are shared with any other individuals or organizations. If at any time you wish to be removed from this list, please let us know. All previous Updates dating from March 2004 are archived at our website at www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org

**JOIN US ON OCTOBER 20, 2006 IN NEW YORK CITY
FOR A PRESENTATION ABOUT OUR LATEST PROJECT:**

***“SPARKS OF LIFE” – A FEATURE-LENGTH
SCREENPLAY ABOUT WILHELM REICH***

Our annual benefit for The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Endowment Fund will feature a presentation by Kevin Hinchey—Associate Director of the Wilhelm Reich Museum—about a screenplay he has written for which he is now seeking a “development deal.” Mr. Hinchey will discuss the research and writing of *“Sparks of Life”* and will read excerpts from the screenplay. He will also discuss his earlier efforts in the 1980s and early 90s—as a working screenwriter in Los Angeles—to solicit interest in a major motion picture about Wilhelm Reich.

This evening will also include a champagne fete with hors d’oeuvres.

When: Friday - October 20, 2006 - 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Where: The Williams Club, 24 East 39th St., New York City

Contribution: \$75.00 per person to benefit The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Endowment Fund. \$35.00 for students with valid college or university I.D.

Checks can be made out to The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust Endowment Fund, and mailed to The Wilhelm Reich Museum, P.O. Box 687, Rangeley, ME 04970. For more information—or to R.S.V.P. if you’re planning to attend—please contact us at (207) 864-3443 or email: wreich@rangeley.org

For more information (from our August 2006 Update) about the screenplay *Sparks of Life*, please go to:

http://www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org/06_08_update.html#screenplay

DISTORTION ABOUT REICH ON NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO: “ALL THINGS CONSIDERED” – SEPTEMBER 13, 2006

As we've mentioned in previous Updates, nearly 50 years after Reich's death we continue to hear the same destructive distortions, misstatements, and ridicule about the orgone energy accumulator. Which, for us, only reinforces the urgency for bonafide clinical trials of orgone accumulators and blankets in the United States. Unless these distortions about the orgone energy accumulator—a key tool in Reich's medical and scientific research—are consistently and strongly challenged and corrected, Reich will continue to be ridiculed and dismissed by the traditional medical and scientific communities in America.

What's so disheartening about this latest example of distortion is that it occurred on a segment of National Public Radio's "*All Things Considered*," an award-winning program renowned for its intellectual integrity. The September 13th segment was entitled "*Lawsuit Targets U.S. Aid for Faith-Based Counseling*," and featured host Robert Siegel talking with Robert Tuttle, law professor at George Washington University, who is an analyst for the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy.

About three minutes into the approximately five-minute segment was a reference to Reich, which we transcribed from an NPR audio download. For proper context, we also transcribed the dialogue leading up to the pertinent reference and the remarks immediately following it:

TUTTLE: *"...This is the first case challenging a specific program on marriage. But there have been lawsuits on sexual abstinence education, on substance abuse treatment, on mentoring for children of prisoners. And they all come out the same way. If the government funds religious content and activities, the activity is likely to be found to be an impermissible government expenditure."*

SIEGEL: *"Let me try to come at the application of the separation of church and state here from a sceptical angle."*

TUTTLE: *"Sure".*

SIEGEL: *"Why should the application of the New Testament to marriage counseling violate a national principle of ours when another group that might apply, say, Reichian therapy, and suggest that the orgone box is a good technique for saving a marriage—something that might be regarded as just as wacky an idea as an atheist might regard the Christian method—why would that be a legitimate grant?"*

TUTTLE: *"Well, I think the short answer is history. We have a much longer history of problems when religious organizations take control of government, or when government thinks that its job is to impose a particular faith, than we do with other kinds of ideologies..."*

REACTION TO “ALL THINGS CONSIDERED” SEPTEMBER 13, 2006 SEGMENT

In these situations it’s always important to rationally evaluate the situation, to ask the right questions, to respond appropriately, and to learn useful lessons. Our initial reaction is that Robert Siegel’s remarks—occurring as they did in such a credible media venue—call to mind the misstatements about Reich and the orgone energy accumulator that appeared in the January 3, 2005 edition of *New Yorker* magazine. (See: http://www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org/05_01_update.html#factual)

The *New Yorker* piece was written by Alix Spiegel, who, ironically, has been a frequent contributor to “*All Things Considered*” as a segment producer and on-air commentator. Whether Alix Spiegel’s error-filled “take” on Reich and the orgone accumulator had any bearing on Robert Siegel’s remarks is anyone’s guess (while the similarity of their last names makes all of this sound like a bad “Who’s On First?” routine.)

The real issues and questions are these:

- Of the 21 book titles by Reich currently available—comprising over 6000 pages of Reich’s own writings—what, if anything, has Robert Siegel actually read?
- Has Robert Siegel ever read a single volume of the *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone-Research*, *Annals of the Orgone Institute*, *Orgone Energy Bulletin*, or *C.O.R.E.*, which comprise hundreds of additional pages of material written by Reich and his co-workers?
- If Robert Siegel has not read any of these primary materials, how then did he formulate his opinions about Reich, about Reich’s work, and, specifically, about the orgone energy accumulator?

In discussing Alix Spiegel’s *New Yorker* piece in our January 2005 Update (see: http://www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org/05_01_update.html#mwe) we wrote, “We do not attribute any malicious intent to either the *New Yorker* or to the writer. Falsifications about Reich’s work have long taken on a life of their own and are frequently repeated as fact simply because of their durability and prevalence. But these distortions, willful or not, continue to be destructive and must be immediately addressed.” That being said, we remain disappointed that our letter to the *New Yorker* (see: http://www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org/05_01_update.html#letter) never elicited any answer from either Alix Spiegel or the magazine’s editors.

Similarly, because of Robert Siegel’s longstanding reputation for intellectual integrity, we give him the benefit of the doubt and do not attribute any malicious intent to him. But, as The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust—created by Reich and charged by him to “*safeguard the truth about my life and work against distortion after my death*”—we are compelled to respond to Robert Siegel’s comments.

RESPONSE TO “ALL THINGS CONSIDERED” SEPTEMBER 13, 2006 SEGMENT

Dear Mr. Siegel,

As regular listeners of “*All Things Considered*,” it’s disheartening to hear someone of your integrity give credence to longtime misstatements and distortions about the work of physician/scientist Wilhelm Reich. We refer to your September 13th segment “*Lawsuit Targets U.S. Aid for Faith-Based Counseling*” in which you asked law professor Robert Tuttle the following question:

“Why should the application of the New Testament to marriage counseling violate a national principal of ours, when another group that might apply, say, Reichian therapy, and suggest that the orgone box is a good technique for saving a marriage—something that might be regarded as just as wacky an idea as an atheist might regard the Christian method—why would that be a legitimate idea?”

Of the countless examples you could have cited, we can’t help but wonder why you would choose this one. It was distortions such as this one that ultimately led to Reich’s books *being banned and burned in America in the 1950s*, by order of a Federal Court injunction.

Today, however, there is no excuse for not checking one’s facts about Reich. There are 21 book titles by Reich currently available from reputable New York publisher Farrar Straus & Giroux, comprising over 6000 pages of Reich’s own writings. In addition, Reich’s original research journals and bulletins, comprising hundreds of additional pages—are available from The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust which was created by Reich to safeguard his medical and scientific legacy.

The two obvious questions are: Have you read any of these primary materials? And if not, then how did you formulate your opinion of Reich’s work, and specifically of the orgone energy accumulator (what you call the “orgone box”)?

Nowhere does Reich ever mention the orgone energy accumulator—an experimental scientific and medical tool--as having anything to do with saving a marriage. If you or anyone else can show us a statement by Reich that says otherwise, please show it to us.

Your remark that some “Reichian” group is suggesting the “wacky” idea that “the orgone box is a good technique for saving a marriage” subtly perpetuates the destructive slander—originating in a 1947 article in *New Republic* magazine—that the orgone energy accumulator is some sort of sexual device. Your remark also indicates one of two things:

- A misunderstanding on your part about Reich’s medical and scientific work, based solely on secondary sources and hearsay.

- Or your personal knowledge of a specific professional group (of which we are unaware) that is making this misguided claim for the orgone accumulator

Either way your remark demonstrates a lapse of judgment at best, and at worst, intellectual laziness. Sexual claims for the accumulator were strongly and consistently denied by Reich, starting with a 1947 letter from the Orgone Institute (Reich's research organization) addressed "To All Users of the Orgone Energy Accumulator." (p. 432-433 *American Odyssey*, Farrar Straus & Giroux 1999) This letter includes the following statement:

"The orgone accumulator does not, as you well know, create sexual excitement, but it solely increases the general biological energy level of the organism. It cannot provide orgasmic potency, as the slanderous article by [Mildred] Brady [*New Republic* May, 26, 1947] maliciously stated. Unfortunately this wrong statement was taken over blindly by irresponsible writers in other publications."

Reich's medical scientific legacy is far too rich and promising to warrant what are now decades of distortion and falsification. Surely an individual of your intellectual caliber, working on one of the most distinguished radio programs today, might find other aspects of Reich's work and legacy more worthy of your attention: For example:

- Several American doctors are now putting together a proposal for bonafide clinical trials of Reich's medical work.
- An International Conference on Orgonomy will be held in Rangeley, Maine in the summer of 2007.
- Starting in November 2007, scholars and researchers will be granted access to the Reich Archives which are stored at the Center for the History of Medicine (formerly the Rare Books and Special Collections) at Harvard University's Countway Library of Medicine, one of the world's premier medical libraries.
- The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust is currently trying to interest Hollywood in a completed, fact-based feature-length screenplay about Reich.

Wouldn't stories such as these be better suited to the fine storytelling traditions of "*All Things Considered*"?

Sincerely,

Mary Higgins – Director, The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust & The Wilhelm Reich Museum
 Kevin Hinchey – Associate Director of The Wilhelm Reich Museum,
 Board Member of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust

(The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust, established by Reich in 1957, operates the Wilhelm Reich Museum in Rangeley, ME; manages the Reich Archives at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard University; and since 1960 has worked with Farrar Straus & Giroux to publish over 20 titles by Reich.)

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: WILHELM REICH WAS NOT CONVICTED OF FRAUD

There is still considerable misunderstanding about Reich's legal case, and specifically about the charges of which he was convicted and for which he was imprisoned. Too often we read derogatory or poorly researched accounts stating that a jury found Reich guilty of fraud or mail fraud, or of defrauding the public with false claims of curing cancer. None of which is true.

In 1954, Reich was served with a Complaint for Injunction signed by the U.S. Attorney for the State of Maine [i.e. Peter Mills, who had been a former attorney for Reich and for The Wilhelm Reich Foundation.] This Complaint sought to enjoin Reich and The Wilhelm Reich Foundation from specific activities, including the interstate shipment of orgone accumulators and specific literature. The Complaint called upon Reich to appear in court to show good reason why he should not be enjoined from these activities.

Reich responded with a letter to the judge, explaining that he could not appear in court, since doing so would be allowing a court of law to judge scientific matters. Consequently, a Decree of Injunction was issued on default. Several months later Dr. Silvert—a student of Reich's—shipped a truckload of accumulators and books from Maine to New York without Reich's knowledge, a violation of the Injunction. In 1955 he and Reich were charged with contempt of court for violating the Injunction.

In his charge to the jury on May 9, 1956, Judge Sweeney stated: "The case we are trying is purely on the question of the violation of the Injunction. We are not trying the merits of orgone. We are not trying the merits of anything in this world, except that we are going to justify the dignity of this court, if we can, if anyone has violated its order. Now I leave it to you to say whether there has been a violation of the order and who did it."

The jury subsequently found Reich and Silvert guilty of contempt of court for having violated the Injunction. The Wilhelm Reich Foundation was fined \$10,000, Reich was sentenced to two years in a federal prison, and Dr. Silvert was sentenced to one year and a day in a federal prison.

“MAN’S RIGHT TO KNOW” NOW ON DVD

In the spring of this year we decided to make *“Man’s Right To Know”*—our 28-minute biographical video about Reich—available on DVD. But because we’ve been so busy with our summer programs, we’ve just gotten around to it. So it’s official: *“Man’s Right To Know”* is now on DVD for \$24.95 from our Online Bookstore (and will still be available on video in VHS and PAL formats).

UNTIL NEXT MONTH

Please share this Update with colleagues, friends, and family who may be interested in the life and legacy of Wilhelm Reich and the good works of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust and The Wilhelm Reich Museum.

Thank you again for your friendship and support.