
**“Wilhelm Reich
in the 21st Century”**

**Opening Remarks at the
2007 International Conference on Orgonomy**

**Rangeley, Maine
July 30, 2007**

Fifty years ago, on March 22, 1957—two days before his 60th birthday—Wilhelm Reich was delivered to the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania to serve a two-year sentence for contempt-of-court. Reich had been convicted on May 7, 1956 of violating a 1954 Federal Decree of Injunction.

This Injunction had banned the interstate shipment of orgone energy accumulators by Reich himself or by The Wilhelm Reich Foundation. It banned from interstate commerce any so-called labeling for these accumulators, which included any of Reich’s literature containing any statements, representations, or suggestions that “*the alleged orgone energy exists.*”

The Injunction ordered the recall and destruction of all orgone accumulators and their parts, which were owned or controlled by Reich or the Foundation. It ordered the destruction of specific published materials as labeling for the orgone accumulators including all issues of *The International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone-Research*, *The Annals of the Orgone Institute*, and the *Orgone Energy Bulletins*.

The Injunction also cited the titles of ten hardcover books written by Reich, and ordered these books withheld from distribution until such time as all references to orgone energy were deleted.

By the time Reich entered prison in March of 1957, the directives of this Injunction had been carried out:

- Three accumulators destroyed outside the Student Laboratory at Orgonon on June 5, 1956.
- Several boxes of his publications burned outside the Laboratory three weeks later.
- A month after that, on July 23, the panels for about fifty orgone accumulators were dismantled in the town of Rangeley by the local contractors who had built them.
- And exactly one month after that—on August 23, 1956—several tons of Reich’s publications were burned under FDA supervision in a New York City Department of Sanitation garbage incinerator...including those hardcover books which were only to have been banned from circulation:

The Mass Psychology of Fascism
Character Analysis
The Sexual Revolution
The Function of the Orgasm
The Cancer Biopathy
Ether, God, and Devil
Cosmic Superimposition
Listen, Little Man
People in Trouble
The Murder of Christ

Boxes and boxes of these books burned by the United States government.

And to compound the enormity of this tragedy, fifty years ago this Fall—seven-and-a-half months after entering the Lewisburg Penitentiary—Wilhelm Reich died of heart-failure on November 3, 1957 at the age of 60.

And so today, a half century later, the year 2007 carries with it a mix of emotions. It seems only fitting that it be a time of reflection, as well as anticipation. And a time of both sadness and celebration.

And what we should certainly celebrate as we begin today is the friendship, generosity, the spirit of cooperation and the significant achievements of our Conference presenters.

All of whom responded without any hesitation when I asked for their help last year in putting together this Conference. All of whom are here voluntarily and without compensation, since none could be provided. All of whom have invested considerable time, personal expense and effort to travel here from numerous European countries and from across the United States.

That these presenters have gathered here this week to share their experience, their research, and their practical applications of Reich's legacy, that they are here with us to collectively strategize for more widespread applications of orgonomy in the future is a rare opportunity and a gift to all of us, for which we should all be deeply appreciative. And Mary Higgins and I would like to thank all of our presenters for making this Conference possible.

Of equal cause for celebration are the rest of you whose personal or professional interest in Reich's legacy is being manifested in a tangible and practical way this week by your support for this Conference and by what we hope will be your enthusiastic participation. That all of you are here today—in the conveniently located, easy-to-reach Rangeley Lakes Region of Maine—is the result of significant expenditures of your time, effort and money. And to you also, Mary and I are deeply grateful.

The year 2007 has long been the subject of considerable discussion, speculation and expectation, and not solely because it commemorates the 50th year of Reich's death. But, rather, because of particular stipulations in Reich's Last Will and Testament, which he signed on March 8, 1957. In the Will's opening paragraph, Reich wrote:

“I made the consideration of secure transmission to future generations of a vast empire of scientific accomplishments the guide in my last disposition. 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.*”

Later in the Will, in discussing his archives—which, at the time, were stored in the Observatory at Orgonon—Reich directed that these archives:

“...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.”

Yet now, a half-century later, in what some people like to call a “milestone” year, any anticipation and expectation about Reich’s archives and about the future of Reich’s legacy needs to be tempered with a dispassionate appraisal of how Reich’s life and work are commonly perceived today.

Which means that the implicit sadness of this so-called “milestone year” needs to be acknowledged, needs to be reflected upon, to remind us that much of the past is still with us, to help us appreciate the formidable challenges to Reich’s legacy in the 21st century, and to better understand the potential and promise of the practical applications of this rich legacy.

And so it’s appropriate that we reflect on the sadness over the loss of this pioneering physician and scientist, over the silencing of this great mind 50 years ago...sadness over what else Reich might have achieved if had lived and worked unencumbered even a few years longer. And what might have been in the past five decades: what, of Reich’s legacy, might have taken root in some substantial way in this country in the past 50 years if not for Reich’s incarceration and death...if not for the chilling effect of a government Complaint for Injunction that declared that “*orgone energy is non-existent*”...if not for the chilling effect of book banning and book burning in this democracy...if not for the very real fear of the knock on the door here in America and, with it, the fear of loss of profession and livelihood that haunted those who had worked with Reich...if not for the chilling effect of the American Medical, Psychiatric, and Psychoanalytic Associations in this country who cooperated with the Food and Drug Administration to discredit Reich, and who continually condemn, dismiss and misrepresent his legacy.

And while no one should diminish the fact that we are here this week in a spirit of hope and optimism and fellowship, let’s not deceive ourselves and misconstrue our enthusiasm and our hope for Reich’s legacy as any indicator of any significant mainstream interest in his work. Beyond the confines of a relatively small, informal, loosely-knit global community interested in Reich—comprising perhaps several thousands of people—beyond this small number, the year 2007 is utterly meaningless.

Here in America, for example—Reich’s adopted country—who and how many in academic, medical, psychiatric and natural scientific circles know or care when Wilhelm Reich died...know or care that his books, research journals and bulletins were burned in this country in the 1950s?

Who among them cares or has ever thought about the lost opportunities of Reich's legacy, of what might have been in the past five-decades here in America?

And who and how many in these professional communities have actually read and studied any of the over 7000 pages of Reich's writings and publications that are publicly available today, including 21 hardcover books, plus reprints of Reich's research journals, bulletins, and other materials?

So who and how many in these professional circles could possibly know or care about 282 archive-boxes of additional primary materials at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard University?

And what of this notion—that many people have—that it's simply a matter of time before these academic, medical and scientific communities give serious consideration to Reich's legacy? How can any of us simply believe that Reich will be vindicated by history without trying to define or at least imagine exactly how and when and by whom this vindication might happen?

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

- *The Bion Experiments on the Origins of Life*
- *The Bion Experiments on the Cancer Problem*
- *The Cancer Biopathy*
- The medical case-studies by Reich and his co-workers, from the *Orgone Energy Bulletins* and the *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone-Research...*
- Reich's diary entries from the 1930s and 1940s, as compiled in *Beyond Psychology* and *American Odyssey*
- and the *Orgonomic Diagnosis of Cancer Biopathy*, which is a laboratory manual for performing the Reich Blood Tests.

And in what American medical school, medical program, research laboratory, or scientific curriculum do we see any indication that Reich's work may some day be discussed, considered, tested and practiced? Or that current applications of Reich's medical and scientific research, some of which will be presented at this Conference, might also be given serious consideration?

And where today—if anywhere—are the young physicists who are reading:

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

And in what university physics curriculum or research program is there any indication that these texts may some day be read and discussed to understand orgone bio-physics?

In America certainly—as well as other countries—Reich’s name has been kept alive largely by those practicing orgone therapy. And today we’ll be hearing from some of those people. And this is certainly cause for celebration, that every day Reich’s therapeutic methods are providing help for pain.

But where today in America are the young psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, therapists and psychologists who are reading Reich’s books, such as:

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

And how many of these people have ever listened to the hours of available CDs of Reich himself discussing therapeutic issues and technique with his orgone therapists?

The result of this litany of distortion, dismissal and silence is a cumulative and corrosive portrayal of Reich and his legacy that is replicated and metastasized in books, newspapers, magazines, professional journals, academic dissertations, on National Public Radio, on television, and in film. And now, on countless websites across the Internet, the premier source of information today and for all future generations.

A cumulative and corrosive portrayal of Reich as pseudo-scientist and medical charlatan; of the discovery of orgone energy as fantasy and fraud; of over two decades of Reich’s laboratory research and scientific field-work as unworthy of serious attention; and of the orgone accumulator as an object of ridicule that Reich was promoting as a sexual device and as a cure for cancer.

None of which is true. But all of which has produced enduring and measurable consequences. For example:

- In America, major funding sources for medical and scientific research completely dismissive of anything to do with orgone research.
- In America, among college academics in the natural sciences, there is reticence—and even fear—of including or mentioning Reich’s scientific work in their curricula.
- In today’s publishing world in America, little interest in Reich’s unpublished manuscripts.
- And in terms of The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust and the Museum, major funding sources for historic preservation, archival preservation, educational programs, and capital endowments uninterested in anything to do with Reich’s legacy.

All of which begs the obvious question, “*Where in this dispassionate appraisal of how Reich is commonly perceived might we find reasonable cause for sustainable hope for the future?*”

To which I would suggest that perhaps we can find some hope in the realization that what happened to Reich in his lifetime is not unusual at all; that although Reich’s legacy itself is remarkable—and perhaps unparalleled in its breadth and dimension—what happened to Reich himself is nothing more than another tragic example of one of history’s most frequent themes: the pioneer and the innovator, misunderstood and maligned in his own lifetime.

And the truth is, given the scope and the vast implications of Reich’s work, given the patterns of human behavior and human history across the centuries, had Reich’s work been embraced and accepted in his time, that would have been an historic anomaly.

Which is not to lessen the tragedy of Reich’s fate or mitigate our outrage, but merely to place Reich’s life and legacy into a more useful and accessible context that more people might understand. After all, history is replete with countless examples of pioneers in science and medicine, in politics and social thought, in arts and industry and other disciplines who have been scorned in their lifetime and subsequently vindicated by history.

And by vindicate, we mean “*to clear, as from an accusation or suspicion*”...or “*to uphold or justify by argument or evidence.*”

And it’s precisely in this common, well-documented theme of vindication by history that we can find great hope for Reich’s legacy. As long as we don’t place that hope in some impersonal and inevitable forces of history, but rather by constantly trying to define exactly how and by whom this vindication might happen. And by defining what might be specific, concrete evidence of vindication.

For example:

- Significant funding sources for medicine, scientific research and historic and archival preservation supporting projects involving Reich’s legacy.
- The experimental use of Reich Blood Tests, the orgone accumulator, and the DORbuster here in America, as acceptable alternatives to traditional medicine.
- And conferences about various aspects of Reich’s legacy that might routinely attract hundreds of people.

But what is disheartening and counterproductive is that for decades, in the minds of many people, the primary instrument for this vindication—if not the sole instrument—are Wilhelm Reich’s archives.

We know factually from countless e-mails to us, from Internet postings and websites we’ve read, and from personal conversations that many people honestly expect that somewhere in Reich’s archives is a specific statement, paper, report, document or file, a particular set of equations or

formulae which, when brought out into the light of the 21st century, will be the equivalent of a scientific slam-dunk. At which time the medical and scientific worlds will have no choice but to admit that they were wrong about Wilhelm Reich.

These are unrealistic expectations, bordering on the mystical, which confer undue burdens upon what is a truly unique and important collection, comprising a total of 98 cubic-feet of materials, contained within 282 archive boxes. Furthermore, this longstanding, inordinate focus on materials that have not been accessible ignores and diminishes the existence and value of over 7000 pages of Reich's publications that are publicly available today to anyone who cares to read them.

In 1954, in his written Response to the Judge explaining why he would not appear in court to answer the original Complaint for Injunction, Reich wrote:

“If painstakingly elaborated and published scientific findings over a period of 30 years could not convince this administration or will not be able to convince any other social administration of the true nature of the discovery of the Life Energy, no litigation in any court anywhere will ever help to do so.”

To which we might add:

“If 7000 pages of publicly available primary resources have not convinced the American medical and scientific communities of the true nature of the discovery of orgone energy, it is unlikely that anything in the archives—in and of itself—is immediately going to do so.”

Vindication by history will not be that simple. And this is not to lessen the genuine excitement and hope that we should be feeling about what are significant contributions and new knowledge in Reich's archives.

But because these archives are part of a broader context of currently available resources, any expectation or intellectually honest appreciation of these archives requires significant understanding of these other primary materials.

In fact, each of us without exception might do well this year to revisit these primary materials to read, re-read and reflect, to refresh ourselves with what is available in Reich's books, journals and bulletins. Because if we're not reading primary resources written by Reich, how can we expect others to do so?

Orgonon, too, is a primary resource for which we've designed ample time this week for you to visit. More than any other place where Reich lived and worked—Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen, Malmo, Oslo and Forest Hills, New York—Orgonon in Rangeley, Maine embodies Reich's natural scientific legacy of orgone energy research. It was at Orgonon where Reich investigated the laws, properties and all manner of practical applications of atmospheric orgone energy. And where, in September 1949, construction on the Orgone Energy Observatory was completed at a cost of \$42,000—approximately \$350,000 in today's currency.

Three months later, in December 1949, the Wilhelm Reich Foundation was incorporated here in the State of Maine. And the Foundation's Charter itself is a fascinating primary resource, as eloquent an expression of Reich's vision as the Orgone Energy Observatory itself. In this Charter, Reich said that the purpose of his Foundation was:

- “To conduct research and teaching in cosmic orgone energy (orgone physics, orgone biophysics), and natural science generally, its medical, technical, other and all future applications.
- “To establish, operate, and maintain observatories for scientific purposes.
- “To establish, operate, and maintain clinics and hospitals for organomic medical research and medical orgone therapy.
- “To establish, operate and maintain bio-energetic research in agriculture.
- “To acquire and preserve the instruments, library, and archives of Wilhelm Reich.
- “To preserve the discoveries of Wilhelm Reich and secure them for posterity by the establishment of institutions of learning, maintenance of museums, or otherwise.
- “To publish any material concerning the discoveries and work of Wilhelm Reich, and all future work of the corporation based on these discoveries.”

Reading these words, can Reich's vision be any clearer? Can the missed opportunities of the past 50 years be more pronounced? And can our future tasks be more precisely defined?

Conferences and anniversary events of all stripes are necessary and well-meaning occasions, as they aspire to address and fulfill our human need for personal contact and fellowship and common cause. But 50 years after Reich's death, any commemoration of his life and legacy demands that we all aspire and commit to much more than simply that.

In 1997, for example, Wilhelm Reich's 100th birthday was deservedly marked and celebrated in numerous events here in America and throughout the world by organizations, affiliations and individuals of significant practical accomplishment. And here in Rangeley, we've periodically marked and celebrated various anniversaries of The Wilhelm Reich Museum.

Yet the widespread silence, distortion, misrepresentation and honest misunderstandings persist a decade later.

Bearing this in mind, then, throughout this Conference I would ask us all to think about *the next thirty years* when the generations that immediately followed Reich's will be gone and when the baby-boomer generation—comprising many of our presenters this week—when that generation will be vanishing. Because the approximate end of the next thirty-years will coincide with two additional anniversaries of paramount importance in Reich's legacy.

So this week, we should all be asking ourselves, “Where—if anywhere—will Reich’s medical and natural scientific legacy be significantly vindicated or understood by the year 2039, specifically January 2039?” Which will mark the 100th anniversary of Reich’s historic discovery of a specific biological energy in a specific microscopic culture in a specific laboratory in Oslo, Norway. A specific biological energy that he called “orgone.”

And “Where—if anywhere—will Reich’s medical and scientific legacy be vindicated by the following year...specifically July 2040?”, the 100th anniversary of Reich’s discovery of atmospheric orgone energy, here above one of the Rangeley Lakes. An energy that provided relief for pain, that could be accumulated and concentrated for the experimental treatment and prevention of disease, an energy that could propel a motor and that could be used responsibly, in the right hands, for weather experimentation.

What significant and intellectually honest appreciation—if any—of Reich’s legacy will there be in America on the occasion of those two monumental scientific anniversaries?

Or will the years 2039 and 2040 be occasions to sadly commemorate a medical and scientific legacy that simply withered away and could not take root here in Reich’s adopted country, despite the true efforts and support of a small community of people?

And so, if this anniversary year of 2007 is truly to be a milestone year—as we all believe it should be, then let this be a milestone year for the appropriate reasons:

Not simply because we rightfully commemorate the 50th year of Reich’s death. And certainly not because of any unrealistic expectations that have been unfairly imposed upon the archives.

Let 2007 be a milestone year for these reasons:

That on the solemn occasion of the 50th year of Reich’s death, and the hopeful occasion of the opening of Reich’s archives to scholars and researchers, and the hopeful occasion of this gathering, of this representation of a community of people touched and inspired by Reich’s legacy: that in the true spirit of what Reich called “work democracy,” we collectively commit to expanding our current efforts, programs and practical applications of Reich’s legacy.

But more important, that we here in the 21st century collectively resolve to devote whatever attention, strategies and resources are necessary, and to marshal whatever collateral support is required to bring Reich’s documented legacy of orgone energy research, together with today’s living legacy of orgone research, to the attention of the academic, medical and scientific communities in this country.

And this resolve needs to be foremost in our minds during all of our Conference’s activities, presentations and discussions. And it is to these presentations and discussions that we now turn...

*Kevin Hinchey
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust*