

## ORGONON – MORE THAN JUST A MUSEUM

by

Mary Henderson, Mary Higgins & Kevin Hinchey

Like many museums in rural Maine, The Wilhelm Reich Museum at Orgonon is open seasonally: Wednesday–Sunday in July and August, and Saturdays in September. That’s about 50 days a year. Which leaves many people wondering, “So what do they do at Orgonon for the *rest* of the year?”

The answer is, “Plenty!”

Orgonon—the name that Wilhelm Reich, M.D. gave to his Rangeley property—is not only the location of the Wilhelm Reich Museum, it is also the home of the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust which was created by Reich in his Last Will and Testament in March 1957.

Reich—a pioneering Austrian psychiatrist, research physician and scientist—created this Trust specifically to "secure transmission to future generations of a vast empire of scientific accomplishments" and to "safeguard the truth about my life and work against distortion and slander after my death." And to carry out these wishes, Reich stipulated that one of the Trust’s tasks was “to operate and maintain the property at Orgonon under the name and style of the Wilhelm Reich Museum.”

Today, the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust is a non-profit corporation in the State of Maine, with offices at Orgonon. But its efforts on behalf of Reich’s legacy extend far beyond the operation of a seasonal museum.

Throughout the year—and *especially* after the museum closes in late September—the Trust attends to its publishing responsibilities with its publisher Farrar, Straus & Giroux in New York City; it manages Reich’s Archives at Harvard University’s Countway Library of Medicine in Boston, one of the world’s premier medical libraries; and it maintains working relationships with medical, scientific and academic professionals in America, Europe, Mexico and South America, many of whom visit Orgonon and Rangeley during the summers.

In the fall, Trust director Mary Higgins was in New York for meetings with Farrar, Straus & Giroux about the latest Reich manuscript *Where’s the Truth? – Letters and Journals 1948-1957*, which Mary assembled from Reich’s correspondence and personal diaries in his archives. Since 1960, the Trust has worked with FS&G to publish 21 books by Reich, including the 10 book titles that were banned and burned by order of a Federal Court injunction in the 1950s. This latest book, due out in 2012, will be the last in a four-volume set of Reich’s autobiographical materials, all of which Mary researched, compiled and edited.

Mary has also been working continually with FS&G’s foreign rights department on issues pertaining to translations and overseas publications of Reich’s titles. Today Reich’s books appear in over two dozen languages.

In October and November, the Trust was invited to give talks in Brazil and Philadelphia about Reich's legacy and the Trust's efforts to safeguard that legacy. These talks were given by Trust director Kevin Hinchey, who earlier last year gave two lectures in Greece at the invitation of Greek physicians who had come to Rangeley in 2009 to attend Orgonon's Summer Conference.

A film writer and professor, Mr. Hinchey spent the winter and spring writing a detailed storyline for a full-length American documentary film about Reich that he will present to producers and funders. And he and the Trust's webmaster from Indiana University just completed a new website ( [www.wilhelmreichtrust.org](http://www.wilhelmreichtrust.org) ) which offers factually accurate information about Reich, substantial excerpts from Reich's publications, and updates about the ongoing work of the Trust.

As the administrator of Reich's Archives at Harvard's Countway Library of Medicine, the Trust is contacted year round by scholars and researchers requesting access to these archives for their projects. Recently, an American science historian who has been studying Reich's laboratory notebooks at the Countway contracted with Harvard University Press to publish a book about Reich's biological experiments in Oslo, Norway in the 1930s. These experiments brought Reich into the realm of cellular and cancer research that he continued in his laboratories in New York and at Orgonon.

This area of Reich's scientific research will also be the subject of several new exhibits at the museum that the Trust is creating with the help of Orgonon's young new caretaker, Adam Menard. Adam is also redesigning the Museum Bookstore & Ticket Office for the museum's opening in July. And this summer—in lieu of Orgonon's traditional summer conferences—the Trust has put together a working group of academics to come to Rangeley for several days to develop a syllabus for a one-semester college or university course about Reich's life and legacy.

But amid all of its far-flung responsibilities and activities, the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust is rooted squarely in the Rangeley and Maine communities. And Trust director and office manager Mary Henderson coordinates a variety of programs that manifest the Trust's commitment to maintaining Orgonon's 175-acre property—with its fields, forests, hiking trails, shorefront and Conference Building—as a vital community resource. Throughout the year, Mary oversees Orgonon's busy schedule of children's activities, science programs, music events, and lectures.

When talking about the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust, the inevitable question arises: "What is the significance of the word '*infant*'?" Reich chose that word as the name for his Trust because his psychiatric, medical and scientific research, spanning 35 years, had convinced him of the importance of safeguarding the emotional health of infants and children. And in his Last Will and Testament he stipulated that the large cottage at Orgonon—which was the living quarters for Reich and his family and which is now called Tamarack—should be used as a summer home for children.

Since 1989, Mary Higgins and Mary Henderson have worked with the Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine (AFFM) to donate this cottage, free of charge for a few weeks each summer, to adoptive, foster and kinship children and their families who could not otherwise afford a summer camp experience as a family. AFFM selects several families by random drawing, and each family spends a week at Tamarack which offers quiet, seclusion, a private dock on Dodge Pond, and the opportunity to be together in the beauty of the Rangeley Lakes Region.

On April 29, 2011, AFFM presented Mary Higgins and Mary Henderson with a beautiful plaque at a ceremony in Orono, in gratitude for the Trust's 22 year involvement in this program. Inscribed on the plaque are these words:

Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine  
Honors  
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust  
  
For the generous gift of time at  
Tamarack Cottage  
Where peace and joy abound  
And memories formed last forever