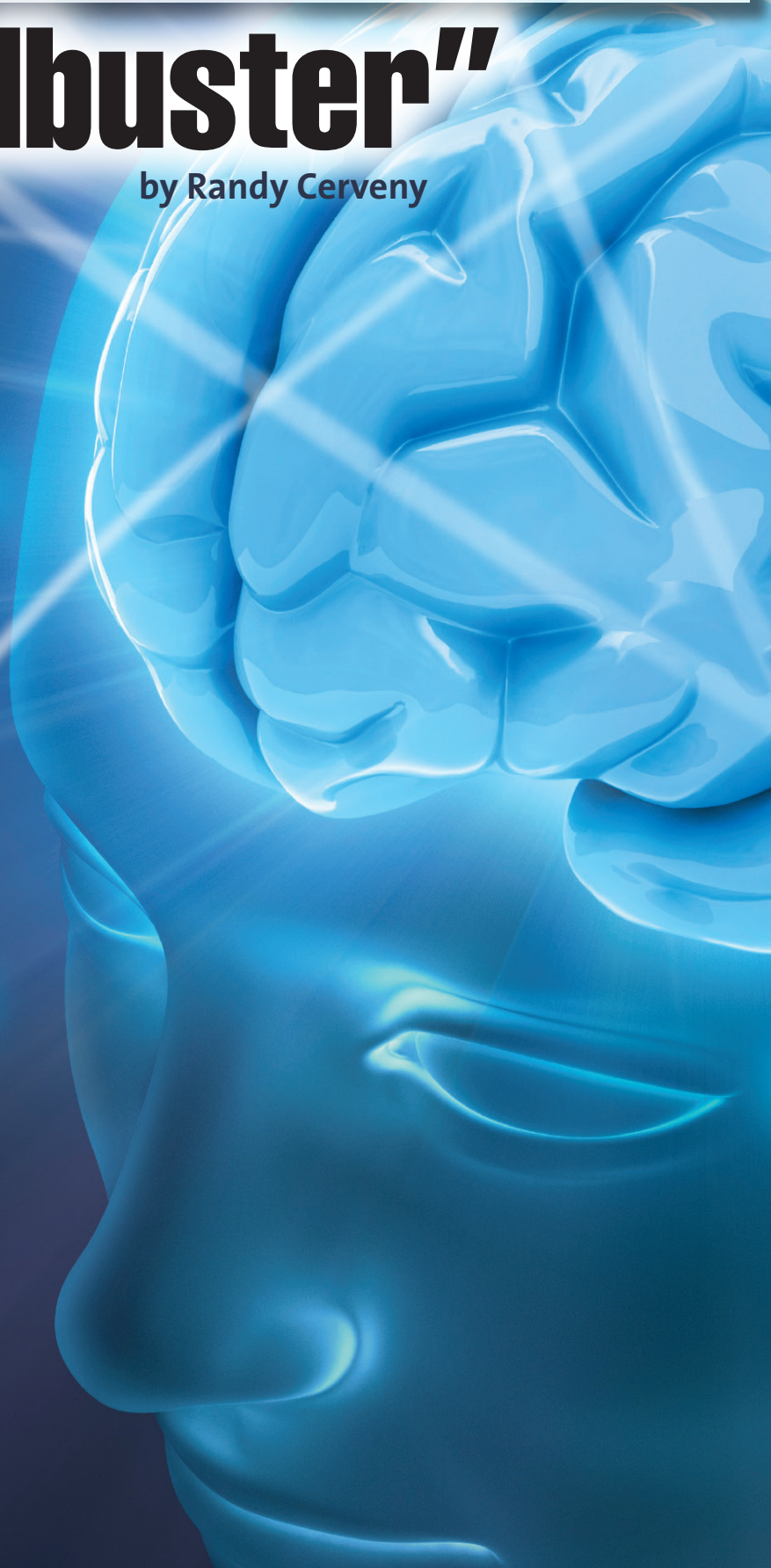


The Strange Career of  
Wilhelm Reich, the Original

# "Cloudbuster"

by Randy Cerveny





Somewhere between weather magic and weather modification lies a strange world of weather conspiracy, manipulation, chancery, and possibly even a bit of misunderstood genius. This aspect of impossible weather involves people who either believe in vast governmental plots involving weather control, or they themselves are using fringe theories and equipment to control the atmospheric elements (often with the government then actively trying to suppress them). And very deep in the archives of such adherents to bizarre weather claims rests the strange case of Wilhelm Reich, the creator of the “cloudbusting” weather gun.

At the very beginning of his career, Wilhelm Reich was a well-respected Austrian-American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who worked with Sigmund Freud in the 1920s. His early work in psychoanalysis was considered useful and intriguing to psychotherapists, but his later research, involving an extension of an early Freudian concept of biologically generated energy, called libido, was received by scientists with extensive skepticism and hostility. Fundamentally, what Reich did in his latter career was to extend the psychological concept of libido to the discovery of an omni-present energy—a living or biological energy—that he termed “orgone.”

I am intrigued at the marked similarities between “orgone” and a concept that achieved cinematic fame a few decades later—the “force” of George Lucas’s *Star Wars*. As Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi defined the force in Lucas’s original book, the *Star Wars* force “is an energy field generated by living things” that “surrounds each and every one of us.” That concept appears to be quite similar to the concept of orgone, as defined by Wilhelm Reich more than 30 years earlier.

According to Reich, the biologically based orgone energy could be seen, and was actually blue in color. Orgone energy was responsible for such things as the color of the sky (though accepted physical theory says that the blueness is the result of atmospheric scattering of light), elements of weather, gravity, the formation of galaxies, and, in particular, was responsible for most aspects of emotion. Reich even (quite wrongly) postulated that the well-known static electrical phenomenon known as St. Elmo’s Fire was an atmospheric manifestation of orgone.

Reich claimed that he could actually collect and accumulate orgone energy through a box-like device that he called an “orgone accumulator.” The accumulator was constructed of alternating layers of organic materials (such as wood or cotton, which would, according to Reich’s theory, attract the orgone energy) and metallic





Reich tested his infamous “cloudbuster” gun in Maine in 1953, an experiment he considered successful.

materials (which he claimed served to radiate the orgone energy toward the center of the box). The accumulator could be made in a variety of sizes—from the size of a small box to the size of a room. Beginning in 1941, Reich began to test the potential health benefits—specifically against cancer—of his accumulator first with mice and later with humans.

In 1947, Reich’s career took a decided downward turn with the publication of an article in the *New Republic* magazine. The article was written by Mildred Edie Brady and was entitled “The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich.” The article implied that Reich, through his orgone accumulator research, was a pronounced health and welfare danger to the public because he fraudulently promoted the accumulator as a medical device. That charge eventually spurred an interest in Reich and his research by the Food and Drug Administration—an interest that would last for over 10 years and would lead to his eventual arrest and imprisonment.

While being investigated by the FDA, William Reich and his assistants continued to explore various means, as his museum phrased it, “to visualize, measure, and harness orgone energy from the atmosphere.” In particular, Reich was interested in the effects of his orgone energy on aspects of the weather. It was at this time that Reich invented what he called the “cloudbuster,” which the Reich museum defines as “an experimental instrument that could affect weather patterns by altering concentrations of orgone energy in the atmosphere.”

The cloudbuster, as constructed by Reich, was a very simple device. It consisted of a set of hollow metal pipes connected by cables that were inserted into a supply of water. According to Reich, water strongly attracts and absorbs orgone, and the pipes would draw the atmospheric orgone through the them. According to Reich’s theory, this movement of orgone could be used to alternately create clouds or dissipate them.

One of Reich’s first major public experiments



of the cloudbuster came in 1953, when he was asked by farmers in Maine (the home of Reich's research laboratory) to end an ongoing drought that was threatening the state's blueberry crop. Reich and his assistants began his experiment on July 6, 1953. According to the July 24, 1953, edition of the Bangor *Daily News*, "Dr. Reich and three assistants set up their 'rain-making' device off the shore of Grand Lake, near the Bangor hydro-electric dam."

According to a reliable source in Ellsworth, Maine, the following climatic changes took place in that city on the night of July 6 and the early morning of July 7: "Rain began to fall shortly after ten o'clock Monday evening, first as a drizzle and then by midnight as a gentle, steady rain. Rain continued throughout the night, and a rain-fall of 0.24 inches was recorded in Ellsworth the following morning."

Actually the official National Weather Service records for Bangor, Maine, do indicate that on July 7, 1953, Bangor received 0.26 inches of rain. Success? Certainly Reich and his followers believed they had created the rains.

Some of Reich's writing indicates that he believed that some clouds were created through what he termed "DOR," or Deadly Orgone Radiation; although the logic is a bit hard to fol-



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An overview of central Oracle, Arizona, where the culmination of Reich's cloudbusting experiments took place.



low, he apparently proposed that some orgone of some clouds was contaminated by radiation (at this time in late 1940s and 1950s, major nuclear testing was being undertaken, and that testing was prominently discussed as influencing weather). Experimentation by Reich suggested that his cloudbuster could dissipate DOR clouds.

The culmination of Reich's "cloudbusting" experiments took place in Tucson, Arizona, in March 1956. Reich had moved his family to Arizona in 1954 because he believed that deserts—or at least the desert Southwest of the United States—were the result of the evil DOR, and therefore the desert was the perfect place to test his cloudbuster. But at that time, he was also becoming more interested in the possibility of alien encounters—he believed that his cloudbuster in May 1953 had actually driven off or destroyed two UFOs. He had become convinced that UFOs could be influenced by the orgone energy emitted by the cloudbusters, and that his cloudbuster was also, in essence, a space gun. Indeed, his cloudbusting effects in Arizona are frequently discussed in many fringe publications as having, in essence, been a single-handed space battle conducted by Reich against aliens.

Reich, his family, and his research team set up their investigation at a 50-acre ranch north of Tucson near the town of Oracle. According to his writing, he says that it had not rained in Tucson for five years. Well, that statement, speaking as a climatologist, is flat-out wrong. When we look at the records of rainfall for Tucson prior to October 1954, we see that the Tucson area had received more than an inch and a half of rain, even in the prior month, September of 1954.

Nevertheless, Reich set up his weather instrument, the cloudbuster, and went to work. He noted that by November 7, 1954, he was observing results: more humidity and even clouds. But then they abruptly disappeared. He theorized—having seen a strange light over the Catalina Mountains—that UFOs were attempting to stop his work. As he wrote in his book *Contact with Space*, "There was no escape from the fact that we were at war with a power unknown to man on Earth."

Reich continued his cloudbusting experiments—and the Tucson area did experience heavy rain. In early January, significant rain occurred over the area. He relocated in March to Jacumba, California, and again claimed extraor-



dinary results—significant rains in the area and even a greening of vegetation. But by that time, the Food and Drug Administration had become convinced that he had violated a court order to stop the transport across state lines of his cloudbusters.

So, following the Tucson experiment, Reich returned to Maine to face his increasing problems with the Food and Drug Administration. Those problems eventually led to his arrest in 1956. He was found guilty of contempt of court. In August of 1956, the FDA supervised the destruction of his orgone accumulators and burned six tons of his books, journals, and papers—still regarded as one of the worst examples of government-sponsored censorship in U.S. history.

Reich died in prison on November 3, 1957, but his work still continues to attract attention at the fringes of accepted science. Several books about Reich and his orgone energy theories have

been written, but the Wilhelm Reich Museum continues to hold copyright on most of his original published research. However, many people have recreated Reich's cloudbuster instrument, and common plans for building a Reich cloudbuster can be found on many Internet Websites and in books.

Was Reich a misunderstood genius of a bizarre type of weather control, or an imaginative charlatan? Most atmospheric scientists undoubtedly believe the latter, but a significant portion of the general population still clings to the wild claims of Wilhelm Reich, developer of the bizarre 'cloudbuster' weather gun. **W**

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