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Me and the Orgone*

Orson Bean **

Excerpted from [Me and the Orgone](#)
The American College of Orgonomy

Editorial Note

In publishing these excerpts we wish to emphasize that it is a subjective, personal account of one man's experience and must not be taken as a model to which all therapy should conform. In particular, the character-analytic aspect of orgone therapy is not described; this is frequently more painful to the patient than having his muscles worked on. So let the reader beware: It is not you on the couch.

When Tuesday came, I left my apartment early and walked leisurely through Carl Shurz Park along the river. It was a cool brisk day, and here and there little steam vapors rose from the spots where a poodle had passed before being pulled along by a doorman. I picked my way carefully through the park, thanking God that people don't keep elephants in New York. I entered Dr. Baker's building, a big modern apartment house, and inquired of the man at the reception desk where his office was. He told me, and either I imagined it or he looked at me strangely. I walked down a long hall toward the door at the end. There was an unusual odor in the corridor as I approached Baker's door, a fresh smell but a heightened one, sort of like ozone. I couldn't pin it down. I tried the door and it was open, so I walked into a large room which would have been the living room if the place were being used as an apartment. There was a couch and a coffee table with up-to-date Life magazines on it. I could see a typically small kitchen and a bathroom, and between them was a door which obviously led to a bedroom. Through the door, I could hear the faint sound of a girl crying. It was about five of two. I waited, leafing through a magazine, for about ten minutes. The door to the bedroom opened, and, before I could look up, I heard the bathroom door close. The girl had apparently darted out and run into the john. A couple of minutes later, Dr. Baker walked into the living room. He was a slight man with deep-set, intense eyes.

"How do you do," he said, "Won't you come in?"

I preceded him into the inner room. It had a small cot in it, covered by a freshly laundered sheet, and a desk with a chair on either side of it, and another chair

against the wall. There were venetian blinds on the window and an amateurishly painted picture on the wall, done, I imagined, by a patient. The entire apartment was painted a milk chocolate brown, and it had wall to wall carpeting in tan.

Dr. Baker sat down behind his desk and indicated the chair in front of it for me. I could faintly hear the girl crying in the bathroom behind me. He took a notebook and a pen out of his desk and asked my full name, age, address, etc. Then he leaned back in his chair and said, "Why are you interested in working with me?" I told him that I had completed a supposedly successful psycho-analysis of ten years duration, that I had worked hard and had gone, I felt, as far as the doctor had been able to take me, and that I felt basically unsatisfied with the results of it and with my life. I told him that I had a thriving career and a baby daughter whom I loved, and an active sex life, although no woman whom I cared about since the departure of my wife. I said that I wasn't depressed or specifically unhappy but that I would never be satisfied until I felt fulfilled and, dare I say it, really happy. I told him of how I had happened to read Reich's Function of the Orgasm and of how I had known the principle was right the moment I had heard of it. Behind me I heard the toilet flush and the bathroom door open, and then the front door open and close.

Dr. Baker said, "I see." "Well," he said, "take off your clothes and let's have a look at you." My eyes went glassy as I stood up and started to undress. "You can leave on your shorts and socks," said Baker, to my relief. I laid my clothes on the chair against the wall in a neat pile, hoping to get a gold star. "Lie down on the bed," said the doctor. "Yes, sure," said Willie the Robot, and did so. "Just breathe naturally," he said, pulling a chair over to the bed and sitting down next to me. I fixed my eyes on a spot of water damage near the upper left-hand corner of Dr. Baker's window and breathed naturally. I thought: "What if I get an erection, or shit on his bed or vomit?" The doctor was feeling the muscles around my jaw and neck. He found a tight cord in my neck, pressed it hard, and kept on pressing it. It hurt like hell, but Little Lord Jesus no crying he makes. "Did that hurt?" asked Dr. Baker.

"Well, a little," I said, not wanting to be any trouble.

"Only a little?" he said.

"Well, it hurt a lot," I said. "It hurt like hell."

"Why didn't you cry?"

"I'm a grown-up."

He began pinching the muscles in the soft part of my shoulders. I wanted to smash him in his sadistic face, put on my clothes, and get the hell out of there. Instead I said "Ow." Then I said, "That hurts."

"It doesn't sound as if it hurts," he said.

"Well, it does" I said and managed an "Ooo, Ooo."

"Now breathe in and out deeply," he said, and he placed the palm of one hand on my chest and pushed down hard on it with the other. The pain was substantial. "What if the bed breaks?" I thought. "What if my spine snaps or I suffocate?"

I breathed in and out for a while, and then Baker found my ribs, and began probing and pressing.

I thought of Franchot Tone in the torture scene from "Lives of Bengal Lancer." I managed to let out a few pitiful cries which I hoped would break Baker's heart. He began to jab at my stomach, prodding here and there to find a tight little knotted muscle. I no longer worried about getting an erection, possibly ever, but the possibility of shitting on his bed loomed even larger. He moved downward, mercifully passing my jockey shorts. I don't know what I had expected him to do, measure my cock or something and began to pinch and prod the muscles of my inner thighs. At that point, I realized that the shoulders and the ribs and the stomach didn't hurt at all. The pain was amazing, especially since it was an area I hadn't thought would ever hurt. Notwithstanding, my feeble vocal expressions were nothing that would have shamed Freddie Bartholomew.

"Turn over," said Baker. I did, and he started at my neck and worked downwards with an unerring instinct for every tight, sore muscle. He pressed and kneaded and jabbed, and if I were Franchot Tone I would have sold out the entire Thirty-First Lancers. "Turn back over again," said Dr. Baker, and I did. "Alright," he said, "I want you to breathe in and out as deeply as you can and at the same time roll your eyes around without moving your head. Try to look at all four walls, one at a time, and move your eye-balls as far from side to side as possible." I began to roll my eyes, feeling rather foolish but grateful that he was no longer tormenting my body. On and on my eyes rolled. "Keep breathing," said Baker. I began to feel a strange pleasurable feeling in my eyes like the sweet fuzziness that happens when you smoke a good stick of pot. The fuzziness began to spread through my face and head, and then down into my body. "Alright," said Baker, "now I want you to continue breathing and do a bicycle kick on the bed with your legs." I began to raise my legs and bring them down rhythmically, striking the bed with my calves. My thighs began to ache, and I wondered when he would say that I had done it long enough, but he didn't. On and on I went until my legs were ready to drop off. Then, gradually, it didn't hurt any more and that same sweet fuzzy sensation of pleasure began to spread through my whole body, only much stronger. I now felt as if a rhythm had taken over my kicking which had nothing to do with any effort on my part. I felt transported and in the grip of something larger than me. I was breathing more deeply than I ever had before and I felt the sensation of each breath all the way down past my lungs and into my pelvis.

Gradually, I felt myself lifted right out of Baker's milk chocolate room and up into the spheres. I was beating to an astral rhythm. Finally, I knew it was time to stop. I lay there for how many minutes I don't know, and I heard his voice say, "How do you feel?"

"Wonderful," I said. "Is this always what happens?"

"More or less," he said. "I can see you on Tuesdays at two. Ideally I'd like to see you twice a week, but I don't have the time, and once a week is more than sufficient."

I stood up shakily and began to pull on my clothes. "I'm a bit dizzy," I said.

"You'll be alright," he said. "Just take it easy. Actually, you're in pretty good shape. It shouldn't take too long."

We agreed on a price per hour, I finished dressing, shook his hand, and walked out into the waiting room. A bald-headed man sat there reading Life magazine. He didn't look up. I wondered how long he had been there and if he had heard my noises in the other room. I walked out the door and down the hall. It seemed as if my feet barely touched the carpeted halls. I came out into the air and crossed the street into the park. I looked up into the sky over the East River. It was a deeper blue than any I had seen in my life, and there seemed to be little flickering pin-points of light in it. I looked at the trees. They were a richer green than I had ever seen. It seemed like all my senses were heightened. I was perceiving everything with greater clarity. I walked home feeling exhilarated and bursting with energy. That night I went to work at the theater and got through my show somehow. I didn't know if I was good or bad. I got home sometime after midnight, and knew there was no remote possibility of going to sleep. Far from settling down, the energy coursing through my body had increased as the night went on, moving rhythmically up and down from head to toe. There was no doubt in my mind that it was orgone energy or whatever the hell name anyone wished to give it. It was like nothing I had ever felt before and I knew that I had tapped into the strongest force in the world. I sat by my window on the river watching the debris float by. I thought about life and people and kids and sex and my ex-wife and psychoanalysis and how in the name of God human beings had gotten themselves into the shape they were in and, finally, about five-thirty in the morning, I fell asleep.

The Wednesday morning after my first visit to Baker, I woke up, after about five hour's sleep, feeling exhilarated. My coffee tasted better than it ever had, and even the garbage floating down the East River seemed to me to have a lightness and symmetry to it. The feeling lasted for the rest of the day. It was a sense of well-being and at-peace-with-the-world-ness. My body felt light, and little ripples of pleasure rolled up and down my arms, legs and torso. When I breathed, the sensation of movement continued down into the base of my torso, and it felt

good. I felt vaguely horny in a tender way, and the thought of women in general filled me with love. I went to the theater that night and did a performance that pleased me. . . . After the show, I went to Dick Edwards Bar for a while and then home to my apartment.

I was starting to unwind. The pleasurable ripples were lessening, and a sense of anxiety was starting to take over. Brownish marks that would be black and blue by the next day began to appear on my body where Baker had pinched and gouged at me. I sat by the window with a drink in my hand and looked at the river. The moon shone brightly, and I made out a wooden box floating by that said Del-Monte on it. Del--Monte what I wondered? Pears, maybe.

I got into bed, realized that I was cold, and reached down to the foot of the bed for the extra blanket. Then it occurred to me that I was cold with fear. I tried to examine my feelings as I had learned to do in psychoanalysis. It was a different kind of dread than I had ever experienced before. I thought of a marionette show I had seen as a kid with skeleton puppets who danced to the music of "La Danse Macabre" and then began to fly apart, with legs and arms and heads coming off, and ribs and pelvises coming apart. I felt like I, too, was starting to come apart. The anxiety was terrific, and I was aware that I was involuntarily tightening up on my muscles to hold myself together. The wonderful, joyous liberated feeling was going away, and in its place was a sense of holding on for dear life. My armoring, if that's what it was, seemed like an old friend now. People say, "I'd rather die in the electric chair than spend my life in prison," but prisoners never say that. A life in chains is better than no life at all, except in theory.

I realized it was going to take all the courage I could muster to de--armor myself. I knew I would fight Dr. Baker every step of the way, but I also remembered how I had felt for that thirty-six hours or so after my first treatment, and I wanted it more than anything else in the world. I got through the night and the rest of the week, and once again picked my way through the dog shit of Carl Shurz Park and past the mayor's house and into Baker's building.

I smelled the ozone in the ball, let myself in, and strained to hear if the girl was in there crying again. After a while, the door to the bedroom opened, and I looked up from my magazine quickly enough to see a pretty young woman with a pale face streak into the bathroom. Baker came right out and told me to go in, which I did. He told me to take my things off and lie down on the cot again. I stripped to my terrible jockey shorts and my black socks (like they wear in a dirty movie, I thought) and I lay down on the bed.

"What kind of a week did you have?" asked Baker, and I told him. I heard the girl flush the toilet and leave.

"Your reaction of clamping down after a period of pleasurable sensations was completely natural and to be expected," he said. "You won't always have those

nice feelings, but it's important to remember what they were like so you can work towards them again. It will help you tolerate the fear you'll feel as your armor breaks down." He then told me to relax and breathe as deeply and easily as I could. I did so, and he watched me for a little while and then said, "Like most people, you breathe in easily enough, but you're not breathing out fully," and with that he once again placed the palm of one hand on my chest and pushed down on it with his other hand. For a slender man, he had the strength of King Kong. I listened intently for the sound of cracking ribs. I would take a deep breath, and Baker would force it out of me, pushing down and holding it till I was making rasping noises like Barry Fitzgerald doing a death rattle. However, when he stopped his pushing, I found that I was able to continue the more or less deep breathing, and I could feel the impulse of the expansion and contraction of my chest continuing down toward my pelvis. It felt good, "Now," said Baker, "continue the breathing and start the bicycle kicking again." I began the rhythmic kicking, lying there on my back, drawing my legs up and smacking my calves down, one after another, on the bed. Baker continued to remind me to breathe as I kicked, and gradually that pleasant tingling sense of moving energy reappeared inside me. I kicked and kicked and breathed and breathed. My lips began to feel full and tingly and sensuous, and my fingers felt filled with energy, as if I could point one of them, like a Marvel Comics Super-hero, and a ray would shoot out of it.

The session came to an end, and, once again, I walked out of Baker's office on a cloud. For several weeks on Tuesdays at two, I breathed and kicked. (I have since found out that my chest and breathing were being freed to mobilize energy in my body, which would help in the armoring process.) Baker now had me pounding with my fists on the bed as I kicked. I would pound and kick and breathe, and the rhythm would take me over, and I would be transported.

Then, on Tuesday, a terrifying thing happened: I began to feel paralyzed. I had been doing my breathing and kicking routine when I noticed that my face and lips felt funny and my fingers began to flex like they had a charley-horse in them. I felt an almost painful sensation like someone had plugged me into the wall and turned on the juice. Then I couldn't move my face or arms at all, and Baker stopped everything and began rubbing my hands, and gradually I returned to normal. "What the hell was that?" I asked.

"You built up more energy than you could tolerate at this point," he said, "so your body contracted against it."

"Maybe it was too much oxygen from all that breathing," I said.

"No," said Baker, "that's what classical medicine would say it was, but you'll see . . . later on in your therapy you'll be able to breathe as much as you like without contracting."

Tuesdays came and went, and, when Baker felt that I had built up enough energy in my chest, he began work releasing the chronically tightened muscles which controlled my eyes. This is the first segment of armoring which has to be freed in all patients.

To start freeing my eye armoring, Dr. Baker held a pencil in front of me and told me to keep looking at it. He then moved it around quickly in random patterns which forced me to look about spontaneously. This would be kept up for what seemed like fifteen or twenty minutes and the results were amazing to me. My eyes felt free in my head, and I could sense a direct connection between them and my brain. Then, he would have me roll my eyes about without moving my head, forcing them to focus on each wall in the room as their glance lit upon it. All the time I was doing this, I would have to keep breathing deeply and rhythmically.

He would tell me to grimace and make faces (I felt like a fool). He would have me try to make my eyes look suspicious or attempt to get them to express longing. All of these being used again for the first time in many, many years, and it felt wonderful.

One day in the midst of expressing longing, I suddenly thought about an old dog of mine. His name was Homer, and I had gotten him from the Animal Rescue League in Boston when I was nine or ten. I had taken him home on the subway, and we had fallen in love. He was a large, ungainly, half-grown shepherd. I had rescued him from a cage and from death, and he seemed to know it, and no two creatures on earth had ever felt so close. We were together constantly, and I always felt deliriously happy when I found him waiting for me after school. I would tie a rope around his neck and take him for long walks, and then we would come home and spend what seemed like hours staring into each other's eyes. But Homer was a nervous dog, and my parents were constantly afraid he would bite one of the neighborhood children. One day he nipped at my mother and my father called the Animal Rescue League, and they sent a truck and took him away. I ran to my room and threw myself on my bed and sobbed for an hour. Then, I made a vow that no one would ever make me cry again, and I never did cry not even when my mother died when I was in high school, until that day in Dr. Baker's office. Tears began to roll down my cheeks for the first time in twenty-five years. I lay on the bed there crying, and then the hour was over, and I walked through Cart Shurz Park and thought about Homer, and cried some more.

On the following Tuesday, instead of a pencil, Dr. Baker pulled out a fountain pen flashlight. He turned out the lights and shone it in my eyes and moved it around. It had a psychedelic effect. I followed it with made patterns in the dark, and the effect was startling. I could actually feel the unlikely sensation of my brains moving in my head. Baker waved the flashlight around in front of me for about fifteen minutes and then he turned on the lights and looked deep into my eyes and said, "They're coming along nicely." Everything about the way he worked with me and the way he passed judgment on how I was responding was not

mechanical, but was the result of one human being's ability to put himself in touch with the feelings and energy charges of another.

"Make a face at me," said Baker, and I turned on him with a stupid leer. "Now, accentuate it," he said. I twisted my face into a hideous gargoyle's expression. "What does it make you feel?" he asked.

"I dunno," I lied.

"It must make you feel something."

"Well, I guess-contemptuous."

"You guess?"

"Yes."

"You don't know?"

"Alright, contemptuous."

"You feel contemptuous of me?"

"Well, I must, I suppose."

"You suppose?"

"Alright, Goddamnit! I do!"

"Feel what?"

"Contemptuous! Jesus!"

"What's the matter?"

"I told you what I felt."

"But I didn't feel it from you."

"Alright, damnit, it's a lot of crap-lying here rolling my eyes around."

"Stick your finger down your throat," said Baker.

"What?" I said.

"Gag yourself."

"But I'll throw up all over your bed."

"If you want to, you can," he said. "Just keep breathing while you do."

I lay there breathing deeply and stuck my finger down my throat and gagged. Then, I did it again.

"Keep breathing," said Baker. My lower lip began to tremble like a little kid's, tears began to run down my face, and I began to bawl. I sobbed for five minutes as if my heart would break. Finally, the crying subsided.

"Did anything occur to you?" asked Baker.

"I thought about my mother and how much I loved her and how I felt like I could never reach her, and I just felt hopeless and heart-broken," I said. "I felt like I was able to feel these things deeply for the first time since I was little, and it's such a relief to be able to cry, and it isn't a lot of crap. I was just scared."

"Yes," he said, "It is frightening. You have a lot of anger to get out, lot of hate and rage, and then a lot of longing and a lot of love." "Okay," he said, "I'll see you next time."

And I got up and got dressed and left.

"Yell," said Baker one day as I lay on his bed of pain in my terrible Fruit of the Looms.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Just yell," he said, and I let out a feeble croak and then giggled. "Is that the best you can do?" he asked.

"Awk!" I replied and laughed again. He grabbed hold of the back of my head with one hand and pushed my chin down my throat with the other with all his might. I was sure I'd look like Andy Gump for life.

"Jesus," I said when he finally let go.

"Now, let me hear you yell," said Baker. A loud sound came out of me that I was sure someone else had made.

"Again," he said, and once more the marvelous ventrillo worked and a big noise came out of me.

"Turn over," he said, and I flopped over, and he began prodding at my back around my shoulder blades. He found a spot he liked and began to press it. He pressed it hard, and I let out a howl. He squeezed and he pinched at it, and I lay there and screamed. It occurred to me that I had never really screamed before, except maybe when I was a baby, and I'm not even sure that New England babies scream. Screaming was something that actresses do in the movies. But the muscle that Baker had found did the trick. It wasn't that it hurt so much-although it did-it was that he had found the "on" button, and I had no choice. At least it seemed that way. The muscles he was loosening were the very ones which I had tightened up on so many years before when it had suited my purpose never to scream again. I had kept them tight for so long that the condition had become chronic, and now Baker was unlocking them and all the stored-up screams were pouring out. Finally, the governor sent a reprieve, and Baker stopped gouging.

"Now," he said, "make a fist and hit the bed." I scrunched my hands together and pounded feebly at the sheet.

"Harder," said Baker. I felt like a wimp. Suddenly he began gouging at that sore, knotted muscle again, and he didn't stop, and then I really hit the bed. I began pounding hard with both fists, lying there on my stomach, yelling and screaming and biting and having a tantrum. I tried to beat my way through the bed to get away from his hands. I sobbed uncontrollably. I cried harder than I ever had before. Then Baker let me alone, and I just lay there sobbing deeply. Every time I took a breath, it felt like it went right down to the base of my spine, and then I'd cry again, wracking, convulsive sobs. I cried for about five minutes, and then I lay there with my face buried in the sheet for another five, involuntarily breathing those deep, deep breaths. Finally, I recovered and turned over on my back.

"How do you feel?" asked Baker.

"I feel fantastic relief," I answered. "It's just great to be able to cry again after all these years, but there seems to be something missing. The feeling is incomplete. I also noticed that there are very few tears when I cry."

"The hard emotions have to come out first," said Baker, "the rage and the fury and the hate. Only when they're released can you get through to the tender feelings-the love and longing and sadness. Your crying is angry crying right now."

On Tuesday after Tuesday, Baker jabbed at me. He found muscles where I didn't know they existed, and they were all tight, tense and knotted. He knew just which ones to look for and what they were holding in and what to do to make them let go. It hurt like hell, and it became a way of life with me to be absolutely covered with black and blue marks. I'm sure that the people at the theater, when they saw me change in the dressing room, thought I had fallen into the clutches of a sado-masochistic weirdo. As Baker jabbed and pinched and dug, I howled. I screamed

and ranted and shrieked and clawed at the bed. I sobbed and pounded and beat. I rolled my eyes and shook my head and carried on like a lunatic. And every time, the sessions would end with my breathing impulses going deeper and deeper down my body until I could feel them in my feet.

I would leave his office with the energy coursing around in me like the lights on a pinball machine. The bald guy with the Life magazine would look up and say hello now, and I would go out through the lobby of the building, past the man at the reception desk who looked at me strangely, and out into the air. Baker's building was smack down on the river, and, if you had to be in New York, it was as nice a place as you could find. That's why old man Gracie built his mansion there in 1799 and that's why the mayor lives in it now. When I came out of the office, I would always look up in the sky to see if I could spot the tiny dancing points of light which Reich had said were discharges of orgone energy. The way they moved in and out and around each other seemed almost playful to me, and it always made me smile when I saw them. On Tuesday nights, I could always count on staying up till close to dawn because the energy in me was like a hundred cups of coffee.

I started to get those insanely delirious streaming sensations again. They were like a soft Spring breeze blowing through me, and they made me feel an awareness of my body in 3-D. They seemed to be restricted mostly to the upper part of me, but they felt wonderful and I was grateful for them. Dr. Baker kept on trying out different methods of having me get rage out. One day, he handed me a sheet folded and rolled up like a baseball bat and asked me if I would like to hit the bed with it. I sat back on my heels and used the rolled up sheet like a carpet beater, smacking the be-Jesus out of the bed. It felt great. He told me to make different sounds as I hit, so I did. I growled ferociously or made sadistic grunts or various noises that sounded vaguely sexual to me. I would smash and smack at the bed until I felt completely exhausted and just couldn't go on anymore. Then he would have me do the old bicycle kick and the arm pounding, lying on my back and flailing about like an infant having a tantrum in its crib. The breathing and the rhythmic pounding would transport me, and I would become an infant again and get the old tantrums out of my system. As the freeing of my armor proceeded systematically down towards my pelvis, I began having deeply meaningful dreams at night, which I would describe to Dr. Baker, but which I found I was very often able to spontaneously analyze myself. I no longer worried about getting paralyzed, since my system could now tolerate its increased energy level with no difficulty.

Deep feelings of heartbreak and longing started to pour out of me, which I had never been able to get anywhere near in my ten years of psychoanalysis. Baker would tell me to reach out my arms longingly, and just the act of doing so could bring back a flood of deeply tender memories of my mother and of the frustrations I had felt as a child.

My crying now began to change in quality. Having worked through my stored-up rage, fury, and hatred to the point where I could express them fully and get them out of my system, the deeper layer of soft feelings emerged. My anger at the childhood affronts (real or otherwise) which I felt I had suffered at the hands of my parents went away. My feelings of hatred for my mother, which came from the feeling that I had been rejected by her, faded, and what I now felt was tender, longing love. But, since she was no longer here and because I'm not a kid anymore anyway, the love turned to heartbreak. One day, lying on Baker's bed, I thought about my mother's dying and I sobbed and sobbed. I felt for his hand, and he let me hold it, and he stroked my arm and comforted me. When I had finished crying, I got dressed and walked out of the building and crossed over to the river and stood for a long time looking down at it and realized that I had finally, twenty years after my mother's death, bid her goodbye.

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