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**FINDING AID TO
THE WILLIAM RICHARDS COLLECTION ON
WALTER PAHNKE,
circa 1964-1971**

**Purdue University Libraries
Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections
Research Center
504 West State Street
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2058**

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Processed by: Kristin Leaman, September 2011
Updated: March 2021

Descriptive Summary

Creator Information	Pahnke, Walter, 1931-1971
Title	William Richards collection on Walter Pahnke
Collection Identifier	MSP 68
Date Span	1952-1972, predominant 1964-1971
Abstract	The William Richards Collection on Walter Pahnke (1952-1972; 0.2 cubic feet) contains materials collected and donated by William Richards that document the life and work of his close colleague, Walter Pahnke. It includes some of Pahnke's important academic writings, copies of personal manuscripts, some biographical information, writings by his wife (Eva Sontum Pahnke), and materials memorializing his untimely passing.
Extent	0.2 cubic feet (1 box)
Finding Aid Author	Kristin Leaman, 2011
Languages	English
Repository	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

Administrative Information

Location Information:	ASC
Access Restrictions:	Collection is open for research.
Acquisition Information:	April 17, 2009; William Richards; Donation
Accession Number:	20090417
Preferred Citation:	MSP 68, William Richards Collection on Walter Pahnke, Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
Copyright Notice:	Copyright restrictions may apply. Consult a reference archivist for details.

Subjects and Genres

Persons

Pahnke, Walter

Organizations

Maryland Psychiatric Research Center
Spring Grove State Hospital (Catonsville, Md.)

Topics

Death – Psychological Aspects
Hallucinogenic drugs
Hallucinogenic drugs and religious experience
Mysticism – Psychology
Psychedelic medicine
LSD (Drug) -- Therapeutic Use
LSD (Drug) -- Therapeutic Use -- History
Psychedelics—Therapeutic use

Form and Genre Types

Black and white photographs
Doctoral dissertations
Manuscripts (Documents)
Obituaries
Personal narratives
Poetry
Resumes (personal records)
Reprints
Memorial service programs
Dreams – Personal narratives

Occupations

Psychiatry
Psychopharmacology
Psychedelic psychiatry

Biography of Walter Pahnke

Walter Norman Pahnke (1931-1971) was born on January 18, 1931, in Harvey, Illinois, to Ferol (Helfrich) and Walter Dorance Pahnke (1896-1985). He earned his Artium Baccalaureus (magna cum laude) from Carleton College in 1952, his MD from Harvard Medical School in 1956, his BD (cum laude) from Harvard Divinity School in 1960, and his PhD from Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1964. He designed and conducted the well-known "Good Friday Experiment" in April 1962 as part of his PhD research under advisors Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. This controlled experiment evaluated the potential of psilocybin to catalyze religious experiences. During his PhD work, he received a Sheldon Travelling Fellowship from Harvard, which allowed him to travel to Europe to train with Hanscarl Leuner at the University of Göttingen in Germany. In 1964, he undertook his psychiatric residency at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center in Boston, where he continued his research with psilocybin. In 1966, he joined the team at the Spring Grove State Hospital as a research psychiatrist in psychedelic therapy, where he oversaw the treatment of terminal cancer patients. In 1969, he was promoted to director of clinical sciences research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, where he conducted sessions with LSD and DPT on terminal cancer patients, alcoholics, and those diagnosed with severe neurosis. His primary research interests included psychopharmacology (especially psychedelic drugs in regard to psychotherapeutic usefulness, sociological abuse, and religious implications), psychiatric and ethical issues in the care of the dying patient, and the psychology of religion. Pahnke wrote extensively on the therapeutic use of LSD, including his seminal 1969 article "The Psychedelic Mystical Experience in the Human Encounter with Death." He was a Phi Beta Kappa member, a Kent Fellow, and an Ingersoll Lecturer at Harvard University. Pahnke was an assistant professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine when he passed away at the age of forty in a scuba diving accident in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Maine on July 10, 1971, leaving behind his wife, Eva, and three children. Pahnke was "admired by his friends for his boundless energy and enthusiasm and for the diversity of his interests."

Source:

"William Richards Collection of Walter Pahnke papers." Purdue University Special Collections and Archives.

Oram, Matthew. *The Trials of Psychedelic Therapy, LSD Psychotherapy in America*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.

Collection Description

Scope

The William Richards Collection of Walter Pahnke papers (1952-1972; 0.2 cubic feet) contains materials that document the life, work, and untimely passing of Walter Pahnke. It includes academic writings, personal reflections, materials written by Pahnke's wife, Eva, and obituaries and related items.

Descriptive Rules Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd Edition / Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Processing Information

Materials have been placed in archival housing.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

William Richards Collection of Walter Pahnke papers, 1952-1972

Folder

1. Pahnke's curriculum vita, photograph, and letter from donor, circa 1955-2009
2. Academic writings, 1963-1971

Summary of Pahnke's doctoral thesis- *Drugs and Mysticism An Analysis of the Relationship between Psychedelic Drug Experiences and the Mystical State of Consciousness*, 1963

Pahnke, Walter. "Drugs and Mysticism" *International Journal of Parapsychology*, Volume 8, Number 2, 1966, pages 295-314.

Pahnke, Walter. "The Psychedelic Mystical Experience in the Human Encounter with Death," *The Psychedelic Review*, Number 11, Winter 1970, pages 3-20.

Pahnke, Water et. Al. "The Experimental Use of Psychedelic (LSD) Psychotherapy," *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*, Volume 212, Number 11, June 1970, pages 1856-1863.

Pahnke, Walter. "The Use of Psychedelic Drugs in Parapsychological Research," *Parapsychology Review*, Volume 2, Number 4, 1971, pages 5-6, 12-14.

3. Personal writings, 1950-1971

Copy of letter Pahnke wrote to himself to be opened in the year 2000, 1950

Copy of a typed first person account of Pahnke's LSD experience, which occurred in Germany after his thesis defense was completed and he was cleared for graduation. It took place at Hanscarl Leuner's clinic in Gottingen, and William Richards was the guide.

Copy of a page from Pahnke's personal journal, describing a vivid and disturbing "warning dream," 1971

4. Eva Pahnke materials, 1964-1989

"Death of a Child," poem by Walter's wife, Eva, 1964.

Copy of letter from Eva Pahnke to friends concerning Walter's death and the finding of a file named "Wally – Biographical Material," which contained

Walter's account of his disturbing dream in 1971. Eva writes a personal note to William Richards at the end of the letter, 1989

5. Obituary and related materials, 1971

Copy of letter from William Richards, Robert Soskin, Stanislav Grof, and Charles Savage concerning the death of Walter Pahnke and his memorial service, 1971

Copy of obituary typescript, 1971 (Publication information unknown)

Copy of obituary which appeared in the Parapsychology Review, 1971

Copy of Walter Pahnke's memorial service program, 1971

Prayer by Howard Thurman, the African American Dean of the Boston University Church, where Pahnke conducted his "Good Friday Experiment" as a graduate student

"In Memory of Walter Pahnke" poem by William Richards, 1972