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English II • Period 3

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# Never Say Die

In May of 1965, Mrs. Wilma Jean McLaughlin lay dying of heart disease in an Ohio hospital. Her husband, aware of Robert Ettinger's "Cryogenic Interment" thesis, asked him for help in freezing her body immediately after death in the hope that medical science would eventually be able to restore life, health and even physical youth. With the cooperation of a hospital physician, the hospital administrator, a funeral director, a local commercial firm-which happened to be building cryogenic storage units-and with the approval of the family pastor, preparations were made for this pioneering effort. However, after a midnight meeting of the board of trustees, hospital cooperation was withdrawn and relatives finally persuaded Mr. McLaughlin to reverse his decision. Within a few hours The patient died, unaware that she had almost been given potential "immortality".

Although this particular attempt does not seem of great significance, it was a clear example of future problems and decisions that will soon have to be faced. If they're not looked at now, the cryogenic cause will be greatly hindered

**What is cryogenics?** According to some scientific opinion, if a body is frozen immediately after "clinical death" by special techniques which minimize freezing damage - and stored at liquid nitrogen temperature (-320°F) there will be no further deterioration for a virtually indefinite period. Then it can at least be expected or hoped that sooner or later ways will be found to thaw the body without damage and to cure the cause of death. Then the frozen cadaver patients will be revived and rejuvenated so that they can enjoy their indefinitely extended life.

This is really not such a radical proposal. On the one hand, it is already common place to revive "dead" victims of drowning, heart attacks etc., and it's widely recognized that the medical definitions of "irreversibility" of death are constantly changing.

On the other hand, few dispute that the future will bring increased and perhaps indefinite longevity. Cryogenic internment will simply preserve those, whom medical science is unable to help now, for the qualified doctors of the future.

But above all it must be remembered, as Professor Jean Rostand puts it,

*"This must be regarded as an excellent gamble with little to lose and an enormous prize to gain and as freezing methods are improved the chances become more favorable."*

Preservation is one thing, restoration is another. The latter calls for return of life to a cadaver after low temperature freezing. While progress has been made in preservation there is no reasonable basis for the assumption that this applies to restoration. There seems to be no evidence to support material resurrection after cryogenic preservation. Of course tissues can be reserved indefinitely at a temperature of  $-196^{\circ}\text{C}$  but this preservation is at whatever state the tissues happen to be in on arrival at this temperature. Because of this, speed is the essential word for the freezing process. This is to minimize the irreversible damage that can be done to the brain and other cells, after death and before freezing.

One process used includes giving the cadaver artificial respiration and an external heart massage. An anti-coagulant is injected to ensure some circulation of blood carrying the badly needed oxygen. Other chemicals are added to the body and as the six hour process comes to a finish, the body is frozen in dry ice. A lapse of a few days and the body is placed in a cryo-capsule. Some processes differ in that they remove all fluids from the body and inject an anti-freeze in its place.

Dr. B. Renault Able of Los Angeles says,

*"Possibly the whole process would be performed best if it were begun a few moments before death would naturally occur. Cell damage could be minimized that way. But that raises other problems, even legal problems. That sort of thing might be considered suicide or perhaps murder".*

The first man to be frozen was James H. Bedford of Los Angeles, a retired, 73-year-old psychology professor, he died of cancer January 12, 1967, and was frozen by Robert Nelson and affiliates of the California Cryonics Society of which he was\* head.

At least two other freezings have been widely publicized. That of Mrs. Maria Sweet, probably because she couldn't afford a cryo-capsule at the time of her death. To remedy this problem the Cryonics Society in Los Angeles wrapped her body in tinfoil with her face exposed and placed her rigid body in a casket. Then dry ice was packed around her body, this must be replenished every week, to duplicate the liquid nitrogen temperature.

The second case is that of Stephen Jay Mandell, 24, of New York who died of a chronic intestinal infection. Seven months prior to his death, though, he had joined the Cryonic Society in New York for a fee of \$5.00. He also instructed his mother to make sure that once he was pronounced legally dead, his body would be neither buried or cremated but frozen. Shortly before his death he recorded some things about his life he didn't want to forget. The tape was placed in the capsule with him after he was frozen, August 5, 1968. He did this because he was aware there was a great possibility of brain damage. Doctors say that he actually did suffer irreversible brain damage. But all is not lost, because this was irreversible by today's standards and not those of Mandel's possible future.

Mr. E. Francis Hope who heads the Cryo-care Equipment Corporation in Phoenix Arizona constructed his 10 to 13 foot cryo-capsules on the principle of a thermos bottle. Insulation is gained from the vacuum that is produced and the body floats peacefully in the sub-zero liquid nitrogen. The latest stainless steel cryo-capsules cost somewhere around \$4000. The process cost about \$1000 (liquid nitrogen, labor). Upkeep is taken care of by a trust fund the "patients" set up before death with one of the cryonics societies. Robert Ettinger estimates

that \$8500 would cover the freezing and perpetual storage costs. Financing through group insurance can bring this well within the reach of the average American.

Dr. Able says of the present procedure,

*"We are in a very primitive state of the art. The methods will improve as we gain experience and medicine may have advanced with cures and organ transplants in the next 20 or 30 years that freezing will become unnecessary."*

In view of the status of scientific research in this matter it would seem unwise to encourage the assumption that science is on the verge of a great breakthrough in cryogenic interment. An exploration of the personal, legal and social and religious implications of cryogenic interment seems to be not only unfortunately misleading but curiously interesting."

The prospect of immortality could give life the connotation of endless "fun and games" as our values exist now they are certainly based on the knowledge that time is precious and there is an end. The philosopher Charles Hartshorne notes that no animal endowed with memory ought to live forever because the longer it lives the more the balance between novelty and repetition is upset in favor of repetition, hence of monotony and boredom. Not necessarily, take for instance the case of simply drinking water, no matter how long a human lives he never seems to tire of the taste of water. What Hartshorn forgets is that while constant repetition of the identical experience may well cause boredom, a repeated cycle of variety does not have the same effect.

Possibly the process should wait until scientists are more qualified in this area. One scientist assumes that the problems of repair of the human body, including repair of the effects of freezing and thawing will be solved within 5000 years, possibly even 300 will be enough. It has been pointed out that those now dying cannot wait but must surrender themselves to whatever chance is afforded by current techniques.

Of course the family will suffer in some way. The emotional stress could cruelly continue, because of the uncertainty as to whether the body contains potential life. It seems as though the grief would be extremely comforted by the knowledge that something positive had been done and then his life might be regained. Far greater emotional stress will be experienced by those who make a negative decision on behalf of some relative. In the future, a failure to use the freezer method might be tantamount to suicide.

Of course it's not true that there will have been a great waste if it turns out that the damage done by present freezing methods is truly irreversible. There will still have been enormous benefits; the additional comfort to the relative, the spur to research, greatly advancing the date of perfected freezing methods and improving everyone's chances and the effect on the moral climate of a society oriented to a long life.

If this method is used widely, the laws and customs will have to be altered somewhat. In the future people will consist of three different kinds; the permanently dead, the temporarily dead or frozen, and those that are living. A living person could feasibly be married to two different types of people, those of two different states. A murderer could be imprisoned for only the time it took his victim to be cured and thawed. Certain terms such as assassin, killer, morgue, cemetery, mortician and maybe even death would have to be revised or completely done away with. The future will have to adjust as everyone else will.

Most clergymen believe that freezing is only one more development in the great historical process through which man will develop into a Superman. But does superman need God. What about 'snatching a soul back from heaven', 'impossibility of freezing a soul', 'preserving an empty shell after the vital spark is gone' or 'zombies without souls'. Naturally, no matter how many freezings the patient lives through, final judgment is for God alone.

Laymen and clergymen of many faiths agree that the extension of life, however sophisticated the means and however complex the resulting problems, is our privilege and probably our duty.

- What if they were able to revive man and found that this new life could be kept going only at a lower rate?
- Will children no longer have to be born to prolong our race?
- What are the possible commercial exploitations of the bereaved?
- Where does the soul go when the body is in cold storage?
- Will paradise become a ghost town?
- Will the cycle of nature be upset so as to endanger the lives of the living?
- How will we demand be able to adjust to a strange world, a world where his family and friends were gone forever or waiting in cold storage for the their own awakening?

These questions can't be answered correctly until freezing becomes a widespread method or someone is thawed.

For all its dim future there is no doubt that freezing provides a more cosmetic kind of interment. Traditional interment, such as embalmment or cremation, simply guarantees oblivion. Freezing at least offers a non-zero possibility of revival and there are people who do want to take whatever chances there are now.

It should also be noted that permanent death will surely come someday. No matter how many thawings had been successful, would we ever reach the point where we could say beyond a doubt that death was no more?



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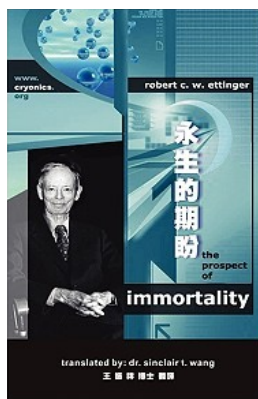
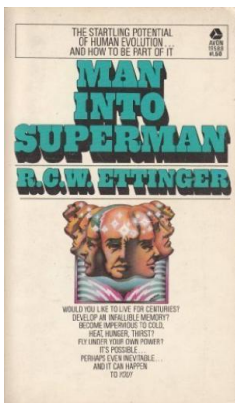
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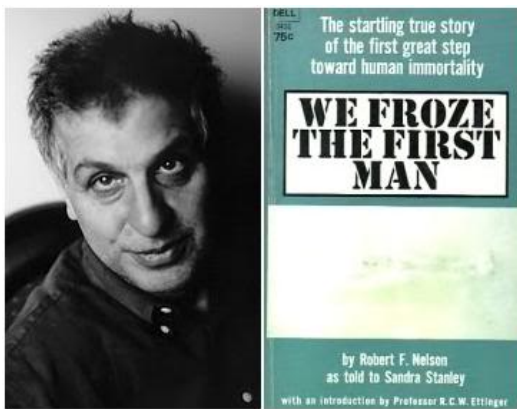


## There ain't no justice...

By Mike Darwin • 02.28.2011

<http://chronopause.com/>

If any press is good press, then cryonics should consider itself blessed indeed; because that perennial bad seed, Robert F. Nelson, is about have a movie made about him – and of course, about cryonics too. Academy Award-winning documentarian Errol Morris (“*The Thin Blue Line*,” “*Standard Operating Procedure*“) is set to take on his second narrative feature film (the first was 1991’s “*The Dark Wind*“) in the form of the screen adaptation of Nelson’s account of Dr. James H. Bedford’s cryopreservation on 12 January, 1967, *We Froze the First Man*. The book was “co-authored” by Nelson, with writer Sandra Stanley, and published in 1968.



### Read the full text of the book as a PDF <sup>1</sup>

Director Errol Morris with the cover of Robert Nelson’s *We Froze the First Man*.

But it gets better. To his credit, Morris isn’t completely credulous, and reportedly the *other* part of the story covered in the film will be inspired by the National Public Radio’s (NPR) “This American Life” segment entitled, “*You’re As Cold As Ice*,” in which Nelson was shown to be almost psychopathically without remorse, and

completely unwilling to accept any blame for the loss of all of the Cryonics Society of California’s patients at Chatsworth, CA.

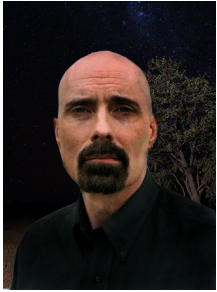
### Listen to the NPR broadcasts on this topic <sup>2</sup>

One can only hope that the screenwriter Zach Helm will be clued in to the truth of “Nelson as scoundrel.” Or, should we hope otherwise, and pray for a movie that makes Nelson the hero Robert Ettinger called him in 1967, 1968, 1980, 1990... to According to [Variety](#), *We Froze the First Man* is supposed to be “a dark comedy that will follow Nelson in the 1960s as he joined a group of fellow enthusiasts who believed they could cheat death through cryonics.” Sounds just great, doesn’t it?

Helm’s previous writing credits include “*Stranger Than Fiction*” and “*Mr. Magorium’s Wonder Emporium*,” with the latter also marking his directorial debut. Morris’ last film was “*Standard Operating Procedure*,” a 2008 documentary about Abu Ghraib prison, where US soldiers abused and humiliated Iraqi prisoners, and captured it all on video and film. Morris has a reputation as a superb documentarian, and I just can’t tell you all how much I’m looking forward to seeing what he does with Nelson’s twisted epistle.

No word yet on the title, *Variety* reports it is currently known simply as the “Untitled Cryonics Project” and is being backed by Mandate Pictures and Film Rites.

Why, why, someone please tell me why, I had to be a cryonicist!



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**Webpage:** <http://chronopause.com/chronopause.com/index.php/2011/02/28/poisoning-the-well/>

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