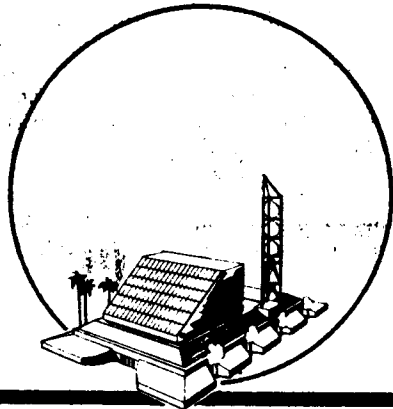


Scientologists have controlled Clearwater: Cazares. Section A.



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clearwater times

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1979

Local news of Dunedin,
Largo, Palm Harbor,
Tarpon Springs, Safety
Harbor, Oldsmar and
all Upper Pinellas.

Scientologists find few sympathizers after latest revelations

By ALAN GUTWEIN-GUENTHER
Sun Staff Writer

CLEARWATER—Residents Friday denounced the Church of Scientology after documents released by a federal judge a day earlier showed the cult wanted to "take control" of Clearwater.

Many of the residents interviewed were not familiar with details of the case, but most expressed a strong hostility toward church members.

"I only know that I don't believe a darn thing they say," said W.B. McFalls, asked his opinion as he shopped at a local supermarket. "If you want to know the truth, I think they're a bunch of damn communists."

"If they weren't here, it'd be a lot better, I can tell you that," said Jim Blankenship. "They're crooks. They're using people to make money. They're just a bunch of kids walking around the streets with books in their hands."

"I know that they own property on Ft. Harrison," said Jimmy Chason. "It's considered a church, and churches are tax free, so it gets a little more serious when they start owning a lot of property."

The Scientologists have purchased the Plasma Products Clearwater Inc. building at 109 N. Ft. Harrison. The building was purchased in May, along with the West Coast Building, 118 N. Ft. Harrison.

The former Fort Harrison hotel,

purchased four years ago for \$2.3 million, the former Bank of Clearwater building on Cleveland Street and the former Quality Inn at 2056 U.S. 19 S all belong to the cult.

"They're too secretive," said Mrs. Marty Baker. "When they bought the Fort Harrison, we went to a public meeting they held there, where they were going to explain why they're here in Clearwater."

"They had a room for the public, but you couldn't go into any other rooms. If you're invited to a place, you ought to be able to look around," Mrs. Baker said.

"We need enough people to put their foot down, to say, 'No, you're not going to take over,' but people will never get together to do that," Mrs. Baker said.

"It'd be a helluva lot better if they would

just move right on out of the state," she added.

Some of the residents interviewed said they didn't feel they were threatened by Scientology. Many said they didn't know much about the extent of the group's activities.

"I'm not concerned because I don't know anything about them," said John Arena.

And Bill Halberson, a Scientologist, said the charges against the group were inflated. "They're not trying to control the downtown by buying it out," said Halberson. "You ought to check into the facts by contacting the church. These sort of rumors are ridiculous."

According to documents now being stud-

ied in federal court, the Scientologists have used various tactics to discover information of interest to the organization. One of the tactics included a fake hit-and-run accident designed to compromise former Clearwater mayor Gabriel Cazares, an outspoken critic of Scientology.

Scientologist documents made public more than a year ago show the group attempted to infiltrate at least three federal agencies: the Justice Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service.

Scientologists wanted to "proof up ourselves against any potential threat by taking control of the key points in the Clearwater area," including governmental agencies and the media, documents released Thursday in Washington revealed.