

Defector describes Scientology

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Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, the 69-year-old founder of the Church of Scientology, likes to emulate Howard Hughes, according to a high-ranking church defector who said she worked with him at Gilman Hot Springs.

In an interview, the defector, Sylvana Garritano, described the Scientology enclave at the former Riverside County resort as "part insane asylum, part forced labor camp," ruled over by Hubbard and a dozen teen-age servants called "commodore messengers."

Garritano is one of 11 church defectors who have filed a \$200 million class-action lawsuit against Scientology in Boston federal court.

Her story of life with Hubbard, contained in a sworn court statement and expanded on in an interview last week, supports other recent accounts of disillusioned Scientologists who have recounted their experiences. Regarding Hubbard, they paint a picture of a reclusive man in absolute control of the people around him; a man who is given to violent outbursts and eccentric behavior.

Scientology at Gilman

The Church of Scientology first moved into Riverside County when it opened a mission in Riverside in 1972. Later, it was revealed that the Church had a secret operation at La Quinta, near Indio. Now, from court records, it has been learned the church has established its worldwide command center at Gilman Hot Springs near Hemet. Here is the second of a two parts on the Gilman operation.

Church officials rebut these descriptions of their leader. But they decline to reveal his whereabouts.

The Rev. Heber Jentzsch, a spokesman for church headquarters in Los Angeles, said Hubbard "has a right to his own personal privacy."

Garritano described Hubbard as a "large man, about 6-foot-2, with dirty shoulder-length red hair, rotten teeth and a definite paunch . . .

"Ron Hubbard tries to act like Howard Hughes. He wants everyone to believe he is reclusive and eccentric. He is a real egocentric," she said.

Hubbard is subject to "severe temper tantrums. He has the most foul mouth I could ever imagine. He is always swearing," she added.

Ernest and Adelle Hartwell, a Las Vegas couple who worked with Hubbard making movies two years ago at a Scientology hideaway in La Quinta, near Indio, similarly described Hubbard.

Garritano, as well as the Hartwells, said the persons closest to Scientology's leader are the "commodore messengers."

The messengers, whom Garritano called "little teen-aged monsters," range in age from 13 to 19. She said they wait on Hubbard hand and foot, mimic his voice when delivering his orders, and have the authority to mete out punishment and demote adult members of the organization.

Anne Rosenblum, one of Hubbard's commodore messengers at La Quinta and now a defector and plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit, said, "LRH was very moody, and had a temper like a volcano. He would yell at anybody."

Describing him in her sworn affidavit as a fanatic about dust and laundry, Rosenblum said Hubbard would often fly into a rage if he thought too much laundry detergent was used to wash his clothes.

"He is also a fanatic about cleanliness. Even after his office had just been dusted top to bottom, he would come in screaming about the dust and how 'you are all trying to kill me!' That was one of his favorite lines — like if the dinner didn't taste right — (he would yell) 'You are trying to kill me!'"

She said at La Quinta Hubbard had everyone convinced his wife's two dogs were "Scientology clears" who could tell if someone was dishonest or disloyal to him.

In rebuttal, the church last week provided the Press-Enterprise with an affidavit signed by Doreen Lea Gillham, a person Garritano identified as one of the commodore messengers at Gilman.

"I have always found Mr. Hubbard warm and considerate," the affidavit said in part, "He expects a good, high-quality job from those who work with him and is quick to reward and commend those who do perform in this manner."

Gillham's affidavit agreed on one point concerning Hubbard: His current hobby is movie-making. He spends hours making Scientology training films, reading books on cinematic technique and watching classic films.

In the early 1960s, Hubbard maintained a floating command post aboard his 300-foot yacht, Apollo. Gilman is believed to be Hubbard's third headquarters since he docked his boat for the last time in Clearwater, Fla., where he established his first land base.

Still clearly a man who loves the sea, he delights in being called "commodore" and giving the people around him ocean-going titles, defectors said. For example, Garritano says his No. 1 man at the landlocked hot springs, Ronald Pook, has the title "port captain."

Hubbard has been married three times. He does not usually live with his current wife, Mary

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L. Ron Hubbard
... in 1968 photo

Sue, who is free on bail following her conviction in federal court for conspiracy to steal government documents.

But Hubbard's two youngest children, Suzette, 23, and Arthur, 20, are usually with him, defectors said. Rosenblum said while Suzette has been assigned a position of responsibility in the church, Arthur "thinks he is an artist. His father dotes on him."

She said part of Hubbard's daily routine is to review and critique his son's paintings. "Arthur's paintings get glowing reviews and some mild criticism from his father. No one would dare tell Hubbard his son can't paint a lick," she said.

Garritano also said Hubbard places so much trust in the teenage cadre serving him that they are in charge when he is not around. None of the messengers' parents lives at the facility, she said. Some of the parents are Scientologists but other messengers have no family ties to the church.

She said, in some cases, the youngsters, who have never had more than grammar school educations, have apprenticed with Hubbard since age 10. They are taught how to repeat messages from Hubbard by copying his voice and demeanor.

"Most of them are perfect mimics. If Hubbard screamed at the messenger when he issued his order, then the messenger screams at the person to whom the message is intended. Some of

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Gilman . . .

(Continued from Page B-1) the messengers can duplicate Hubbard's voice almost perfectly," Garritano said.

Jentzsch replied that "the messengers naturally deliver orders in the tone and demeanor used by Mr. Hubbard. But they do not mimic him."

According to Garritano, the messengers also have the authority to discipline adult members of the camp. Punishment ranges from shouting repeated insults at the offender to making them run laps around the golf course and, in some cases, assigning offenders to a special retraining program.

In one instance, one of Hubbard's messengers, Diana Voegeding, ordered a young woman to clean out a septic tank pool for three days straight because she had written a note criticizing Voegeding, Garritano said.

Security at the facility is tight. Most of the male messengers and several of the adult church officers carry guns and take target practice regularly to hone their marksmanship, Garritano said.

Jentzsch, whose own two children were once "commodore messengers," said he has never seen messengers carrying guns. "Oh no, my word, guns are not for Scientologists," he said.

A barbed wire fence was put up around the dilapidated Gilman mansion — the place many thought Hubbard would live, Garritano said. Dozens of workers, mostly young Scientologists, were brought in last spring to remodel the mansion.

"The house was fully restored. It is a beautiful residence with beautiful furniture," she said. Flood lights were installed outside to "light the place up like a ball park at night."

But Hubbard never lived there.

Instead, Garritano said, a house was purchased several miles away. Hubbard comes daily to the facility in a chauffeur-driven motor home or, occasionally, in his Rolls-Royce, Mercedes or Cadillac automobiles.

According to Garritano, a work day for most of the 200 Scientologists at Gilman typically begins at about 5 p.m. when Hubbard arrives. The day ends normally around 4 a.m. when Hubbard leaves for home.

Throughout most of the night he devotes himself to answering mail, writing telex messages and analyzing membership and book sales figures sent from the churches and missions.

"Hubbard is concerned solely with making money," Garritano said in her affidavit. "He received telexes . . . from across the world. These telexes reported the weekly statistics (money collected from book sales, courses, auditing, debt collection). If the sales figures dropped below a certain level, Hubbard became furious."

Dozens of telex messages are sent with Hubbard's approval from a bungalow at the hot springs to the organization's nearly 300 worldwide churches and missions.

Because Hubbard demands his whereabouts be kept secret, Garritano said most of the Scientologists at Gilman have no idea where he stays. Most are not allowed to leave the property and on rare occasions Hubbard grants to a favored few eight hours "shore leave." During her nine-month stay there, Garritano was allowed one shore leave.

The telex messages going out of Gilman have return addresses in Clearwater to make it appear the correspondence originated from the church's center there, she said.

The Hartwells said a post office box number and phone number in Clearwater were used for their mail and calls to La Quinta. Earlier, the father of a man whose car was seen at Gilman told a reporter he used the same numbers to contact his son, a Scientology purchasing agent.

Garritano said she began to lose faith in "Hubbard's infallibility" in late May of last year when she herself "fell from grace."

"Hubbard went in to a fit, saying the church wasn't making enough money and it was all my fault." She was stripped of her duties as marketing secretary and assigned to "Rehabilitation Project Force," a special retraining program which is conducted by the messengers at Gilman.

Garritano said for two months she was "forced to do slave labor" planting trees and weeding the golf course in temperature reaching 120 degrees.

"I am not a very physical person and this forced labor almost killed me," she said. After work she was subjected to several hours of intense counseling on the E-meter, a galvanic skin response machine Scientologists use in auditing sessions.

"They wanted to know all my sins against the church and Hubbard. They forced this information out of me," she said.

Other more recalcitrant RPF'ers were locked up for days at a time inside their rooms. In

three instances, Garritano said, persons were locked inside a shed which had no electricity, water or toilets.

"If the messengers felt like feeding these people, they would. If they didn't feel like it that day, they didn't," she said.

Church spokesman Jentzsch called Garritano's imprisonment charge "ludicrous and stupid, the wildest dreams of a drugged mind." He said RPF is part of the curriculum for church executives who have violated Scientology's ethical code, including bans against negligence which resulted in the church losing money or theft of church property.

Jentzsch said RPF was modeled after religious monastic orders which emphasized "seclusion and withdrawal from the world, concentration on religious goals, manual labor and rejuvenation of the inner spirit." He said anyone may choose to leave the RPF by renouncing a "billion year contract" some sign with the church, "but in so doing they must sever all ties to Scientology."

The church also sends them bills, sometimes amounting to as much as \$30,000, for the Scientology training they received.

After her experience in RPF, Garritano said, she wanted to leave Gilman "but I was afraid of what they would do to me."

"One evening in the fall I went for a walk toward Massacre Canyon (about a half-mile from the facility). Before I got very far, the guards sent a truck for me. I was ordered to get in. They told me, 'It's not a good idea to leave here. We are going to take you home,'" she said.

Late last summer, Hubbard reinstated her to an executive position. In December, after nine months at Gilman, she convinced Hubbard to give her a vacation. Instead of returning to Gilman after Christmas she stayed in New Jersey with her parents.

Since leaving the Gilman encampment, Garritano said, she has read about the mass suicides of the followers of religious cult leader James Jones in Jonestown, Guyana.

"I know now that, at one time, had Mr. Hubbard told me to commit suicide, I would not have batted an eye. I would have followed him into the grave. Now I look back and think, 'How could I have believed in such a phony?'" she said.

Church spokesman Jentzsch called Garritano "drug-crazed," although he could offer no proof of drug abuse, and one of "a group of people who have joined with an unscrupulous lawyer who are all very money hungry."