

May 7, 1982

Fort Harrison: 'horror house'

By **BILL PRESCOTT**
Sun staff writer

A 17-year veteran of the Church of Scientology told Clearwater city commissioners Thursday she lived through "horror" while staying at the former Fort Harrison Hotel three years ago.

Lori Taverna, who said she broke with the sect two months ago, was asked by Mayor

Son thinks Hubbard dead, 3A
Writer contends harassment, 3A

Charles LeCher to describe a "normal day" while she worked as a Scientology trainer.

"Most of it was horror, so I don't know," said Mrs. Taverna, 39.

But in about three hours of testimony during the second day of the city's public hearings on church activities, the New York City resident alleged a wide range of abuses to sect staff members and their children.

Mrs. Taverna took her seat before the City Commission after the son of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard completed testimony he began Wednesday. In his Thursday appearance, Ronald Edward DeWolf told more about his father and the origins of the controversial church.

And as the day's proceedings ended, a former church financial officer, Casey Kelly, discussed weeks when the Fort Harrison church brought in up to \$2.3 million.

Kelly is scheduled to continue his testimony at 9 a.m. today, according to city consultant Michael Flynn, along with ex-church members Rosie Pace and David Ray and longtime sect foe Paulette Cooper.

Mrs. Taverna said she joined Scientology in June 1965 after attending a free lecture in New York City.

"It sounded good to me," recalled the woman.

The group's goal, she said, was described as "a world without war, crime and insanity." She took courses to become an auditor—a Scientology counselor—and became "very dedicated" to founder Hubbard, she said. He attained "supernatural" status in her thinking, she said.

"Ron Hubbard was worshiped by many people, treated as a god," Mrs. Taverna said.

Her first experience with the sect's Clearwater Flag Land Base at The Fort Harrison Hotel, 215 S. Fort Harrison Ave., came in June 1978, she said. She was asked, she said, to join

(* See HORROR, next page)



LORI TAVERNA
... 'Hubbard was worshiped
... treated as a god.'



CASEY KELLY
... 'I don't know where
that money goes.'

* Witness said she lived through 'horror'

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"Operation Z," a program to disseminate Scientology literature on a large scale, and receive the training in Clearwater. It was considered a great honor to come to Flag, she said.

"It was promoted as the most beautiful place on earth," Mrs. Taverna said.

Instead of paradise, she said, as many as 10 staff people were crowded into dirty, insect-infested rooms.

The purported well-organized program was in disarray, she said, and a planned two-week stay stretched until September 1978 when she was pressed into service to audit lower-level members.

There was great pressure to sell church services, she said, and at one point the staff was fed nothing but rice and beans for a week when sales dropped below quota.

In June 1979 she returned to Clearwater, she said, when "New Era Dianetics" was introduced as the "most spectacular thing in Scientology." Mrs. Taverna said she, her then-10-year-old daughter, and her two sisters signed billion-year contracts to join the "Sea Org" (Flag Land staff) in order to take the high-level courses.

But instead of finding new material in the new higher-level courses, she said it was mostly recycled from lower-level programs. All they did, she said, was hold out "the last hope" to people who had completed the highest available courses but still experienced the ills and problems they were supposed to dispell.

Mrs. Taverna completed the coursework quickly and wished to leave, she said, but officials found fault with her work constantly. The "technicalities" stretched her stay into months, she said, and she was forced again to audit others 14 hours a day.

The stress caused her chronic arthritis to flare, Mrs. Taverna said, almost crippling her. After a short-lived escape, she said guilt forced her to return.

She was disciplined with manual labor and guard-

ed constantly, she said, but escaped finally when she promised to sell her business to buy more courses.

In her experiences with the sect, she said, she saw children neglected, sick people untended and people harassed.

"I felt like I was in an insane asylum," she said.

Mrs. Taverna said she was "shocked" when she learned that Hubbard's past allegedly had been fabricated.

She said she came to the hearings because she feels "responsible to . . . the hundreds of people I've trained," and that Scientology is "a fraud."

Mrs. Taverna's testimony ended with applause from the crowd, and witness Edward Walters hugged her.

Earlier, Hubbard's son DeWolf testified he left the church when Hubbard "wanted me to devise a plan to steal an H-bomb." He derided the alleged powers of Scientology to cure cancer and other diseases.

"In all my experience with Scientology, I have never seen a remission or cure of cancer, period," DeWolf said. "Scientology is a money and power game. It doesn't have much to do with reality."

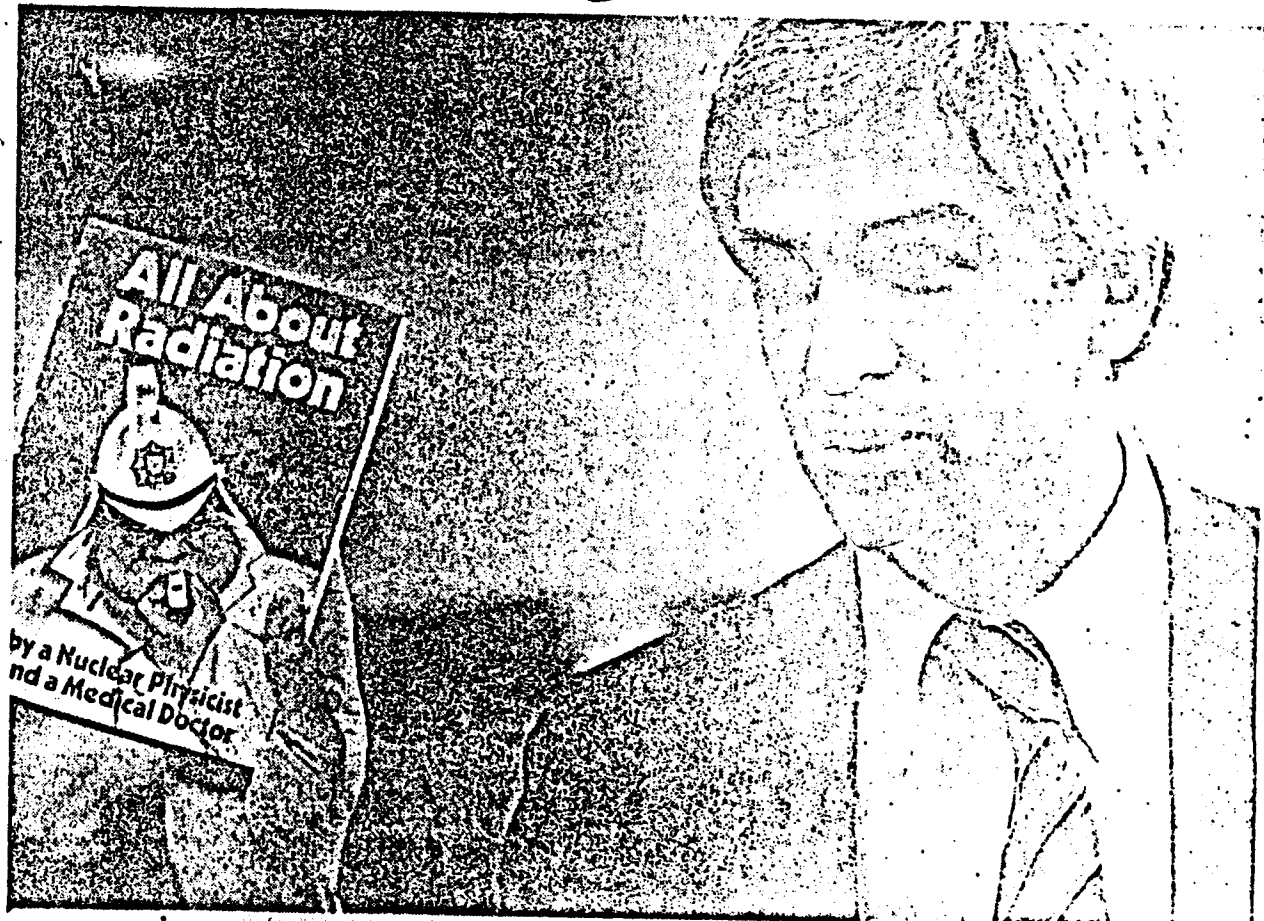
He said several books, allegedly backed by extensive research, were written by his father "off the top of his head." Boston attorney Flynn produced two—"All About Radiation" and "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health"—and said they had been purchased "within the past 24 hours" in Clearwater.

Kelly, who was in Clearwater from late 1977 until 1980, described financial transactions in the church. He said up to \$2.3 million was taken in weekly and "that's tax-free."

"I don't know where that money goes and the people who do, don't tell."

He said he was told the 1975 purchase of \$25 million worth of property around the world made just "a dent" in the organization's cash reserves.

Church spokesman Hugh Wilhere referred questions to Paul B. Johnson, the sect's lawyer. Johnson-



Attorney Michael Flynn holds pamphlet as evidence.

Sun staff photo by HOWARD BALM

called the hearings "a mockery" and said allegations made in the "sweetheart presentations" so far are too "vague" for a response.

"No one there is asking questions trying to ferret

out the truth," he said.

The hearings, Johnson said, "are carefully calculated to cause maximum damage to the Church of Scientology."