

May 9, 1982

Witnesses tell of break-ins, conspiracy

By STEVEN GIRARDI
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In a story of international intrigue, a former senior executive of the Church of Scientology testified Saturday about a worldwide sect network involving infiltrations, conspiracies and smuggling.

Scott Mayer, 38, told Clearwater city commissioners "I have personal experiences of all of these," in the fourth day of the city's Scientology hearings, where legal consultant Michael Flynn paraded seven of his most damaging witnesses.

Commissioners heard also from a former Guardian Office worker who said she used the sect's "confessional files" during several campaigns to discredit defected Scientologists; a man who said he participated in burglaries to obtain confidential legal records to help frame defectors; and two people who said they were targets of those activities.

Saturday marked the final day of testimony against the church. This week has been set aside for church counter-arguments, but the sect has said it has not decided whether to participate.

Mayer said the Scientology Flag Land Base in Clearwater was the central point of his activities as a worldwide church "troubleshooter."

"I'm not here to complain about what the church has done to me," the articulate Mayer told commissioners, "but to impress upon you the magnitude of what you're dealing with."

He said the church uses its community organizations to infiltrate the community. "I'm talking about infiltration in your community by a group of psycho-political operators who have been well-trained."

He said the infiltration, which is part of the sect's goal to convert the planet to Scientology, permeated the U.S. Congress, where spies "routinely report to the Guardian Office daily."

Spies were placed also in Massachusetts government agencies as part of a seven-man conspiracy established in Boston, testified Robert Dardano, a member of the team.

Janie Peterson, who worked in the Las Vegas Guardian Office until 1979, testified earlier the office operated community programs such as Gerus Society, Apple Schools and Narconon with a stated purpose "to make Scientology indispensable to the community. It was basically public relations."

The money from the programs, she said, went to a fund to finance church attacks on its enemies.

Mayer said that during his seven years as a senior executive his orders "came from Clearwater, right here in your city."

He said he was sent to Scientology outposts around the world to handle resistance and devise ways to make more money. He said he combed purportedly private confessional records of auditing sessions, gleaning any personal information that could help in smear campaigns or any other way.

He said confessional files on all church members and mission files were stored in the former Bank of Clearwater building down-



SCOTT MAYER

... sect members well trained

town, world headquarters for the Guardian Office, the sect's enforcement arm. "That's where I was briefed" for missions, he said.

He said also that he briefed couriers, disguised as students or tourists, "on how to get through immigration, customs, postal officials, to get money in and out of the country."

The church has more than 30 bank accounts worldwide, he said.

The sect used five "front companies" which it used as addresses for the money and documents smuggled in and out of the country.

Illustrating his ability to help people leave the country, he said he once arranged passage to Canada in a matter of days for a Scientologist conspirator in Boston whose cover was blown. The church, he said, had left the man "high and dry."

Mayer, who, while in Vietnam, piloted the flagship aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, said he joined the sect with a promise to get certification to skipper unlimited tonnage in any sea or weather conditions.

He was assigned to sect founder L. Ron Hubbard's ship "Apollo," and said he saw severe punishments meted out. One woman, he said, was confined in a compartment where the anchor chain is housed, "notoriously the filthiest place on a ship." She was fed only

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* Sect's web spans globe, witnesses say

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bread and water, he said.

He said he was once locked in a room "with bilge water up to my waist" because he reported late for duty.

He said that while in Clearwater shortly before he left the sect in 1977 he worked at The Fort Harrison "setting up bunk beds to the ceiling. We were just packing them in like rats. This is routine."

In his last mission with the church, he said, he and his wife smuggled \$200,000 in Krugerrands into the country from South America.

Mayer said he went into hiding for three years after leaving the sect, until he was found by the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS used Mayer as a witness and consultant in the 1978 U.S. Tax Court trial concerning sect financial practices between 1968 and 1971, he said.

Mayer, who maintains a secret address, said he came to the hearings because going public may offer him some protection.

"I think enough light has been shed on the church that they'd have to be fools to start knocking people off," he said. "I don't intend to run from Scientology the rest of my life."

He warned commissioners they have become "active enemies" of the church. "That's when they start getting (personal background) data together," he said.

And he told the stunned panel that he was "small potatoes" with the church and "there are people I know who have things that could really curl your hair, but they're afraid to come out."

Mrs. Peterson, the 34-year-old former Guardian Office worker, said she participated in several smear campaigns against church enemies while working in the office until 1979.

She said she got the information from confessional files "looking for blood-dripping crimes" about church enemies, among them Edward Walters, who testified Wednesday, and Lavenda Van Schaick, who testified Sat-

urday.

Although she had been told the sect eliminated its "Fair Game" policy, a plan to deal with enemies by any possible means, "I found out it was not true," she said. "The words weren't used. It was not canceled."

The information was sent to newspapers and other public agencies to discredit them.

She said she was taught to "handle" the press, FBI raids and knew of "tell a lie" drills which taught guardian agents to successfully lie about activities if ever questioned.

"Always attack, never defend," she said of the policy.

She said she was taught to shred documents in the event of an FBI raid. Mayer testified that the sect's most sensitive "red box" files were always ready to be loaded onto one of Hubbard's two ships. Those files escaped discovery when the FBI raided the sect's Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles offices in 1977, Flynn said.

Dardano, 31, testified he was part of a seven-man Boston conspiracy trained to burglarize legal offices in a campaign to secure confidential information on church enemies.

The group, organized by the sect's Boston bureau of the Guardian Office, planted members with the Massachusetts Attorney General Office, the Better Business Bureau, the Consumers Council and the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency, he said.

"We had all the bases covered," he said, adding each of the plants handled Scientology complaints which they never registered.

Dardano said the group wrote smear letters in a 1974 campaign to discredit New York writer Paulette Cooper, who published a 1971 book called "The Scandal of Scientology," as well as against Mrs. Van Schaick.

Ms. Cooper and Mrs. Van Schaick testified also Saturday that they received

almost-constant harassment, including death threats, they incurred after criticizing the church.

Ms. Cooper was the target of "Operation Freak Out" while "Operation Shake and Bake" was directed at Mrs. Van Schaick, they testified.

Mrs. Van Schaick, who left the church in 1979 after nine years, broke into tears when she told of the 1977 shooting death of her brother-in-law David, a Scientologist found dead in Las Vegas. Nevada officials called the death a suicide but she questions that ruling.

She said many of the higher ranking Scientologists are beginning to leave the church and warned that the sect eventually would "be left with a bunch of crippled, psychotic kids . . . Nazis."

Church spokesman Hugh Wilhere maintained his policy of referring all questions to sect lawyer Paul B. Johnson. Johnson, unavailable for comment, has called the hearings a "witch hunt."