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Scientists' pamphlet material called misleading

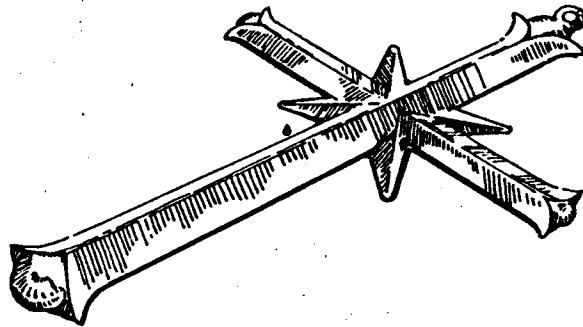
By LAURIE HOLLMAN
Clearwater Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — The Church of Scientology promised Monday to give citizens of Clearwater "adequate information" about itself, but some people already are accusing the group of distributing misleading material.

Others say the church's new policy of openness is merely an old policy to appear to be open and above-board.

The skirmishing came as the Clearwater City Commission wrapped up five days of public hearings on Scientology and the church launched a media blitz intended to win over the public.

The information that some say is misleading appears in a pamphlet, "The Church of Scientology — What Is It?" The 21-page booklet, produced by the church's ministry of public affairs, was distributed to reporters



Monday.

In the pamphlet are several letters commending the church for providing a community service or thanking Scientologists for offering a donation.

THE PAMPHLET says the church "is working to help those individuals in need and areas of society that need guidance," and the "attached documents" offer examples of "the charitable activities of the church."

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Group offers \$3.25-million to buy hotel, motel from Scientologists

By LAURIE HOLLMAN
Clearwater Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — Four doctors, a certified public accountant, a lawyer and a businessman have offered the Church of Scientology \$3.25-million in cash to buy the former Fort Harrison Hotel and Sandcastle Motel.

The offer was made Tuesday, one day after the Clearwater City Commission ended its public hearings on Scientology. The church has 60 days to respond.

Church spokesman Hugh Wilhere said he does not plan to meet with the group. "We get offers all the time" to buy property, he said, but the church isn't interested in selling. "We're here to stay in Clearwater."

Dr. Gilbert Jannelli, a Clearwater optometrist, downtown property owner and spokesman for the seven-member consortium, said the offer is "purely a business and speculative venture." The partners believe that downtown redevelopment will happen, and both hotels are "key pieces" of real estate in choice locations,

he noted.

Jannelli said the group has been trying to buy the two buildings for several years.

IN DECEMBER 1979, Jannelli and several of the partners in this venture offered to buy the Fort Harrison for \$1-million. But the church, which bought the 272-room building in 1975 for \$2.3-million, spurned the offer.

Another group of Clearwater businessmen tried the next month to buy the church's downtown headquarters. It offered an unspecified but higher price. Its offer also was rejected.

Despite the past failures and Wilhere's comments about wanting to stay in Clearwater, Jannelli said the offer was worth a try. "Any group that comes under fire for any reason — whether they have any plans of leaving or not — we're interested in those pieces of real estate," he said.

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One is a letter dated Jan. 27, 1981, from Clearwater Police Chief Sid Klein. In it, he thanks church members for contributing to the 1980 Christmas Cheer Program to help needy and elderly households.

Another is a letter of March 25, 1981, from Steve Santa Cruz, volunteer services center coordinator for the local division of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. In it he thanks a church member for donating 58 tickets so that abused and homeless children could see the Egypt Shrine Circus.

Still another is a letter dated Jan. 13, 1982, from Clareth Mendez, activity director at Padgett's Nursing Home. She thanks two Scientologists for working at the Tampa facility.

Of the six letter-writers contacted Monday, none said they authorized the church to use their letters for publicity. Some said they were angry that the letters were used this way.

KLEIN SAID THE Clearwater Police Department stopped taking donations from the church after learning that his letter could be used to drum up favorable publicity for the church. "I explained to them that this was unfair, and they were taking advantage of the police department," Klein said, "and we would refuse to accept any further donations."

Santa Cruz said HRS had made a similar decision. "I wasn't expecting to have my letter plastered all over the place," he said.

Mrs. Mendez said Scientology volunteers stopped coming to the nursing home several months ago.

A spokesman for another letter-writer — Frank Goble, president of a nonprofit educational clearinghouse called the Thomas Jefferson Research Center — wondered how the church obtained Goble's letter, since it was not addressed to the church. The letter notes that some people praise Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's ideas about teaching.

"The letter has absolutely nothing to do with the church," said Morton Jackson, chairman of the center's board of directors. "I really don't even know how they came to get a copy of it. We take no position on the Church of Scientology."

ASKED ABOUT the letters, Wilhere said: "I think you put them (the letter writers) on the spot. At the time they wrote the letters, they were sincere."

Meanwhile, City Manager Tony Shoemaker and Mayor Charles LeCher said the church public relations blitz and openness campaign were predictable responses to the public hearings.

If the church were really open, they said, tours through the former Fort Harrison Hotel would not have to be guided.

Church spokesman Hugh Wilhere said the tours have to be guided to protect members' privacy and to keep people from interrupting church counseling sessions.

He refused to talk about the hearings, referring all questions to Paul Johnson, the Tampa attorney representing the church.

The Scientology cameramen who recorded the hearings for Johnson again refused to talk on the record about their personal feelings. They told a reporter to check with Wilhere first, and he refused to give permission.

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Other members of the group are Dr. Jim Nielsen, an ophthalmologist; Dr. Bill Strupp, a dentist; Dr. Albert Pacifico, a Birmingham, Ala., surgeon; Rex Harper, the certified public accountant, Clearwater lawyer Don Hall and Fred Thomas, head of the Pinch-A-Penny chain.

This last name is sure to fuel speculation that the group is connected with a push to defeat the proposed bayfront hotel below the downtown Maas Brothers department store or with a futuristic plan to redevelop downtown. Thomas was or is behind both projects.

BUT JANNELLI said the offer to purchase the two hotels had nothing to do with either of them.

In an interview earlier this spring, before the City Commission held its hearings on Scientology, John Wyllys, president of the Greater Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, mentioned the possibility that businessmen would try to buy church property to get the Scientologists to leave.

"It's more possible than you know . . ." he said. "I think that could happen if (you put together) the right people and the right amount of money." He could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1982

Scientology pamphlet said to be misleading

The Church of Scientology is being accused of publishing misleading material in a pamphlet it distributed Monday. The pamphlet was part of a public relations blitz launched by the church after hearings on Scientology by the Clearwater City Commission. In the pamphlet are several letters commending the church for providing a community service or thanking Scientologists for offering a donation. Now some of the letter writers have expressed anger that the letters were made public. One letter, dated March 25, 1981, was from Clearwater Police Chief Sid Klein, who thanked church members for contributing to the 1980 Christmas Cheer program. Contacted Monday, Klein said police stopped taking donations after he learned that his letter could be used to drum up favorable publicity for the church.