



Reporter Flunks Test

Taking a Scientology test, reporter Dennis Wheeler got both good and bad news. He has a "high I.Q." and an "unstable" personality. See story below.

"Unstable" Reporter Discovers "High I.Q."

by Dennis Wheeler
Part of a series

Okay, maybe I'm not Mister Wonderful. And I do have a fault or two — a couple of minor defects in my character, maybe a moment or two of irritability.

But Joanna, the woman facing me across a desk, was showing me scientific proof — verified by my own answers to a complicated quiz — that my personality requires urgent attention. In fact, she said, I'm not only unstable, nervous and critical, but also withdrawn, inactive and irresponsible. She asked me what it is that's ruining my life, and I sensed she was trying to tell me, as gently as she could, that I'm basically just a pretty messed-up person.

But, Joanna assured me, there's hope...a beacon of salvation which has guided thousands of messed-up people like myself...the ultimate development of the human mind...a road from there to "Total Freedom."

Scientology.

I'd met Joanna, ironically, through an ad in the personals column of a local newspaper. "Santa Rosa Testing Center," said the ad. "Free I.Q., aptitude, and personality tests. 721 Mendocino Ave., S.R. 7-10 p.m., Mon.-Fri."

No phone number, and no mention in the ad of a church. But I knew the address was that of the local "mission" of the Church of Scientology, which a recently published book has dubbed "one of the oldest and caggiest of America's cults." I looked up Scientology in the phone book, but the listed number had been disconnected, with no referral. Oh well, I thought wryly, I could use a free I.Q. test.

"CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY," says the battered sign outside 721 Mendocino Avenue in Santa Rosa. Below the words is the Scientology logo, a sinuous "S" entwined in two triangles. The address is that of an older home, squatting snugly between a gas station and the imposing Belvedere building. A neglected rock garden graces the

front yard; the main entrance is a glass door.

Inside, a smiling young woman seated behind a desk greeted me. The comfortably furnished room resembled an ordinary office lobby. Numerous books for sale were artfully displayed on shelves; most were by L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology and its sub-study Dianetics. Posters advertised the local "Apple School," a bulletin board was cluttered with messages, and a large organizational chart faced the front door. Several framed certificates on the walls stated that so-and-so had "attained the state of Clear."

A framed photo of Hubbard himself, in a pensive mood, surveyed the room.

"Can I help you?" the woman asked politely, and I told her I wanted to take the I.Q. test advertised in the paper. Certainly, she said, and settled me down at a table against one wall. While she busied herself collecting the test and an answer sheet, I asked what the test was for, since I'd never heard of a church that gives I.Q. tests. "Oh, it's just a way of finding out more about yourself," she replied cheerily, then added almost as an afterthought, "and the courses we do here can raise your I.Q., so you can take the test again, later, and see the difference."

I made no comment, since I tend to be dubious about the value of I.Q. tests anyway. But soon I was hunched over the table, reading and re-reading the questions and marking the multiple-choice answers on one of those computerized sheets so familiar to students nowadays. Seated next to me, a young woman engrossed in a "personality test" soon finished that one and moved on to the I.Q. test.

I managed to finish 72 of the 80 questions in the allotted half hour. I knew already I'd done lousy on the ones regarding math, and pretty well on the ones involving vocabulary.

The receptionist took my answer sheet to have it scored in another room, and I perched on the edge of an incredibly uncomfortable sofa to await the results.

I'd been handed a picture book to read while I waited — a sort of comic book offering a highly diluted explanation

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“Unstable” Reporter...

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of Scientology and Dianetics. Boring, I thought. A little more interesting was the loose-leaf folder marked “Success Stories.” Inside were blank forms on which people who’d completed various Scientology courses had been invited to write “success stories” — on the condition the stories could be reprinted.

All the affidavits sounded similar — telling how the courses had changed the person’s life, how much happier the person was through Dianetics and Scientology, and so on. Some of the entries had been typed up, some handwritten, some signed only by initials, others by full names.

The receptionist returned with my test score, and ushered me through a door labeled “Auditing Room.” This chamber proved much more spartan than the first, decorated only with a few posters. We sat facing each other across a table, its surface bare except for something to the right which was clumsily hidden by a piece of lumber.

“How well do you think you did?” the receptionist asked coyly.

“Well, pretty good,” I shrugged modestly, recalling the most recent I.Q. test I’d taken, back in junior high.

The woman pushed my answer sheet across the table. “You got 135 points,” she said, smiling, “which means you’re in the top five percent of the population.”

She showed me how she’d tabulated the results — from the 72 questions I’d answered she had subtracted the 12 wrong answers to get 60, then added 75 to make a total score of 135. “We add 75 for men, 70 for women,” she noted.

“Hold it,” I said, “how come men automatically get five points more than women on their I.Q.?” The receptionist shrugged and admitted she had no idea.

Then a gentle probing began: I was asked where I worked, and I blatantly lied, saying I worked at several local print shops. Next, asked if I ever had the feeling I wasn’t using the full potential of my I.Q., I said I sure wasn’t using my meager math skills, because I hate math. But that seemed to be the wrong answer, and the woman — whose name I still didn’t know — slid a pink flyer across the table to me. This proved to be “The Oxford Capacity Analysis Test,” which, according to the flyer, “was developed to determine the condition of 10 basic personality traits reflecting how you control or don’t control life.”

This test contained 200 questions in miniscule type; such things as: “Do you frequently stay up late? Do you consider the modern prisons without bars system ‘doomed to failure’? Are there some things about yourself on which you are touchy? When hunting or fishing do you feel concern for the pain you inflict on game, live bait, or fish? Are you a slow eater? Do you bite your fingernails or chew objects? Is it hard to please you? Do others push you around? Does life seem worthwhile? Do you often ‘sit and think’ about death, sickness, pain, and sorrow? Would it take a definite effort on your part to consider the subject of suicide?”

“You can do this at home and return it tomorrow,” said the woman. I agreed to do so, then said I had to be going.

We returned to the front room, and the woman gave me a “calendar of events” and took my mailing address “so we can keep you up-to-date.”

“Thanks,” I said, and asked her name.

“Joanna,” she said, and smiled again.

The “Capacity Analysis Test” took longer than I’d expected; I had to mark each question “mostly yes or decidedly so,” “uncertain or maybe,” or “mostly no or decidedly no.” The flyer informed me that “a professional consultant will give you a confidential, in depth profile of your personality and how it will effect (sic) your future potential.”

I felt pretty good about myself after taking the test. I’d answered all the questions as honestly as I could, considering that a lot of the questions might have been answered differently if they’d been worded a little more clearly. But overall, I thought, I’m not really such a bad guy. The next day I slipped the answer sheet into the mail slot at the Scientology Building, and a few days later I received a note from Joanna asking me to return to the office for the results.

With the note was a flyer decorated with a beaming sunshine face. “COMMUNICATION makes the whole world brighter,” it said. “Dianetics/Scientology of Santa Rosa offers a professional course in communication for anyone who would like to improve their skill. Call for an appointment to discuss starting dates and class openings.”

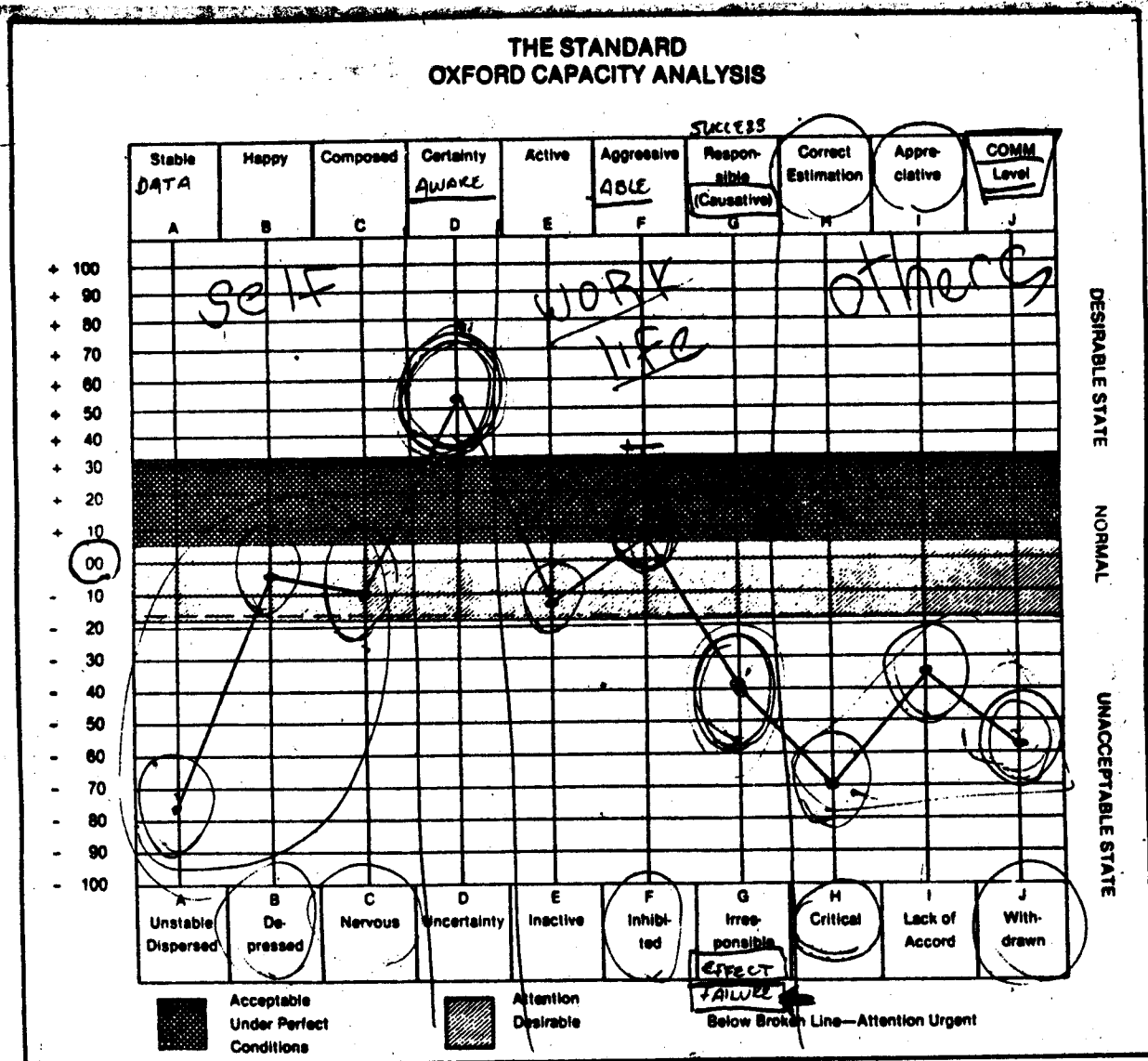
The next day, Joanna — the “professional consultant” — took me into one of the Scientology offices. First she explained the mechanics of a graph which had been drawn up from the results of my personality test. In 10 categories, I could be rated anywhere from “plus-100 (desirable state)” to “minus-100 (unacceptable state),” with zero representing “normal.” Anything lying between zero and approximately minus-18 showed “attention desirable,” and anything between minus-18 and minus-100 showed “attention urgent.”

Then came the unveiling. Joanna pushed my graph toward me, and I barely stifled a gasp of surprise. I knew, from talking to former Scientologists, that my chart would probably show that I was in desperate need of help — assistance which coincidentally or not could be attained best through Scientology itself. Former Scientologists had told me that’s what everyone’s graph *always* shows, no matter how well-adjusted a person is.

But I wasn’t ready to see that line on my chart creeping around so far beneath the horizon of “normal.” Sure, it had a few mountainous peaks, but for the most part its canyons dipped dangerously low into the “unacceptable state.”

Lowest of all, for instance, was the dot on the chart, at minus-74, which showed I was “unstable.” I was also slightly “depressed” (minus-4), “nervous” (minus-10), “inactive” (minus-12), “irresponsible” (minus-40),

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The results of News-Herald reporter Dennis Wheeler's "personality test," sponsored by the local Church of Scientology. Only two of his character traits, according to the graph, are in a "desirable state" or are "acceptable under perfect conditions."

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"critical" (minus-70), had a "lack of accord" (minus-34), and was "withdrawn" (minus-58).

What a mess. Only in one area was I thoroughly "normal," with a dot at plus-8 between "aggressive" and "inhibited," aggression apparently being a desirable state. And only one area of my personality was actually in a desirable state, that of my "certainty" or "awareness," for which I received a rating of plus-52.

Whew! Joanna helpfully explained each aspect of the graph, occasionally asking if I could verify its results. She said I did indeed need "urgent attention" in many aspects of my life, areas which had been in trouble for many years and were very firmly rooted. "Is there any one thing you can say is ruining your life?" she asked, and I had to laugh.

"Nothing's 'ruining' my life," I replied indignantly, and she flip-flopped the question:

"Is there anything you could work on which if cleared up would make your life far better?" I couldn't think of anything, and with a slight look of disapproval she suggested a few. Tapping the graph with a finger, she pointed out that I obviously needed a lot of help communicating with others.

I admitted that I am indeed sometimes painfully shy

with strangers, but at other times I'm a loudmouthed boor. "Okay," Joanna said, smiling, "communication. We do offer a course in that here." She hastened to add that she herself wasn't recommending that I take any specific course, but that I could talking to someone else in the place, later, who could sign me up. She made an appointment for me to hear Scientology's "introductory lecture" (described in the accompanying story). Then she gave me a couple more blank copies of the personality test to give to my friends, and we parted.

My depression at that point *did* seem to be in sort of an "unacceptable" state. Was I really so horribly unstable, nervous, irresponsible, and critical? Am I withdrawn and inactive? The elation I'd felt after finishing the test had been ripped away by one glance at my chart. Vague thoughts lumbered through my mind, and I thought of past loneliness and insecurity and sorrow which usually never trouble me. No doubt about it: according to Scientology I did indeed need urgent attention.

And Scientology was there to see I got it.

Next week: The "Training Regimens" begin.

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