

Son of Scientology founder believes Hubbard dead or ill

Petition filed requesting estate trustee

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The oldest son of L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the Church of Scientology, believes his father is either dead or mentally incompetent, according to a petition filed in Riverside Superior Court.

The son, Ronald E. DeWolf, also claims in the court papers filed Wednesday that officials in the church have stolen millions of dollars, gems and securities either from his 71-year-old father or from Hubbard's estate in the last 12 months. DeWolf, 48, of Carson City, Nev., is asking the court to appoint him as trustee of his father's affairs to protect the assets.

DeWolf, a former Scientologist who now manages an apartment complex in Carson City, claims the worldwide organization is now run by David Miscavage, described in the petition as a "22-year-old with a ninth-grade education." He alleges Miscavage and another church official, James Isaacson, forged Hubbard's signature to loot the accounts.

"I am not attacking LRH (L. Ron Hubbard) in a legal sense," DeWolf said yesterday in a telephone interview, "because no one has ever been able to do that successfully . . . The only way he can contest all of this is to show up physically in court. But I expect he may have trouble doing that because I don't think he is alive."

The son said he has not seen his father since 1959, but DeWolf said he has kept track of the inner workings of the secretive church "through conversations with attorneys, friends and a loose-knit network of former cult members."

DeWolf also left the Church of Scientology in 1959. He said that since then his life has been threatened and he has been subjected to "harassment" by the church. The harassment prompted him, in 1972, to change his name, which had been L. Ron Hubbard Jr.

Allen Hubbert, president of the Church of Scientology of California in Los Angeles, declined to comment yesterday on DeWolf's petition. "I really cannot make a comment until I have seen the documents and have had a



L. Ron Hubbard

chance to consult with our attorneys," he said.

Gerald Armstrong, a former personal aide to L. Ron Hubbard, also said this week that Hubbard may be dead. "There is every chance that the man is in fact dead," said Armstrong, who left the church last year after being a member for 12 years.

"But, it has been the habit, the practice, the policy of the organization as long as I've been in it to originate communications, policies, bulletins, programs, orders in his name and to sign his name to it," he said.

Armstrong said that in the 1970s, when he spent considerable time with Hubbard, the church founder had lost weight and suffered a variety of medical problems. Hubbard, he said, was hospitalized at least twice, once in 1975 in Curacao in the Caribbean and again in 1978 in Los Angeles when he was living in La Quinta in Riverside County's Coachella Valley.

Hubbard's former personal medical officer, Kima Douglas, declined to be interviewed yesterday, but she acknowledged that the church founder suffered from blood clots in the lung. Douglas, who is not a physician, now works in a real estate office in Palm Desert.

While he lived in La Quinta,
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Hubbard laid out secret plans for his death, according to DeWolf. Hubbard instructed Douglas to bury him in the date fields in the area and not to disclose his death. "Shortly thereafter," DeWolf states in his petition, "my father disappeared."

Armstrong said he last saw Hubbard toward the end of last year. "His weight was way down," he said. "He was very shaky. He always shook a lot. His hands were never steady. I felt he looked very weak and drawn."

The Church of Scientology has sued Armstrong in Los Angeles Superior Court. As a personal servant to Hubbard, Armstrong had an estimated 30,000 documents — Hubbard's early writings — which the church claims belong to it. The case is pending.

Hubbard's son filed his petition in Riverside County because his father's last known whereabouts was Gilman Hot Springs, the former resort near Hemet that is now owned by the Scientologists.

Hubbard had earlier lived in a compound in La Quinta where he developed a fear of germs, according to DeWolf's petition. His father had "bursts of uncontrolled rage with attendant screaming, requiring that his surroundings be kept in 'white glove' sterility, that his food be tasted, that his clothes be rinsed in '13 buckets of water.'"

DeWolf contends that his father's financial affairs have been managed by people whom he believes to be officials of the Church of Scientology.

Since October, 1981, DeWolf contends, certain church officials have been stealing from his father's multimillion-dollar estate. DeWolf charges:

✓ Millions of dollars have been removed from Hubbard's bank accounts with forged signatures. On June 14, 1982, an "Arabic" man attempted to deposit a

\$2 million check drawn on an account Hubbard has with E.F. Hutton, the stock brokerage firm. The check was payable to "Aquil Abdul Amiar."

The attempted deposit occurred at the Mid East Bank in New York City. The check was drawn on an unspecified branch of the New England Merchants Bank. The New England bank investigated the check. The son's petition claims the bank determined that Hubbard's signature on the account signature card had been forged by an unknown Scientology official, and the bank has since frozen Hubbard's account.

DeWolf states in the petition that unidentified "individuals who live and work in the area of Los Angeles" manage Hubbard's accounts with E.F. Hutton, and the accounts contain "10 to 20 million dollars in liquid assets." The individuals have "routinely forged" Hubbard's signature in the "past several years."

Hubbard's son said the persons also control about \$1 million of valuable coins belonging to his father.

✓ In June of this year, James Isaacson, representing himself as Hubbard's "personal financial representative," attempted to sell about \$1 million worth of Hubbard's gems on the wholesale market in Los Angeles. Wilkie Cheong of Los Angeles, DeWolf's attorney, said DeWolf does not now know where the gems are or whether anyone has actually bought the stones.

✓ In March several Scientology officials "surreptitiously acquired all of the copyrights" to Hubbard's books and articles, which span 30 years. They also have acquired the patent rights to the "E-Meter," a device used by the church in personality testing.

DeWolf claims in his petition that there have been high-level "purges" and "defections" inside the Church of Scientology since the beginning of 1980. The son contends that church officials under Hubbard's "total control" have gone, "which suggests that

my father is either deceased or incompetent."

Armstrong, the former aide to Hubbard, said the church founder himself started the purges as his health declined. "It seemed like his orders became more bizarre and irrational," Armstrong said this week. "He struck out at people more, either verbally or at his messengers."

"He got the idea he was surrounded by subversive persons. He originated this massive campaign to purge the organization of subversive persons. Hundreds of people were removed. And this continues today."

Armstrong's last job with the church was as the second-ranking public relations officer for Hubbard. He said that DeWolf's claim that the church is actually being run by a 22-year-old man — David Miscavage — may be true.

When Hubbard moved from Gilman Hot Springs to an unknown location in March, 1980, he was accompanied by Miscavage and two other church officials. "The conduit and communications lines to Hubbard was David Miscavage," Armstrong said.

Miscavage, he said, was on Hubbard's personal staff in 1976, as a messenger, and he has risen rapidly to a position of power in the church.

Hubbard's son contends in his petition that Isaacson was responsible for looting Hubbard's accounts. Armstrong said that in 1980 and part of 1981, Isaacson had been in charge of at least some of Hubbard's money.

"He was in charge of bank accounts," Armstrong said. "He was in charge of investments."

A hearing on DeWolf's petition filed this week has been scheduled for Dec. 30.

In order for DeWolf to be named trustee, a judge must first decide whether to declare Hubbard legally dead. If a judge determines Hubbard is alive, DeWolf will argue that his father is mentally incompetent to handle his financial affairs, according to Cheong, DeWolf's attorney.