

THE FLINT JOURNAL

MONDAY, APRIL 11, 1983 □ 25 CENTS ★

© Copyright 1983, The Flint Journal. All rights reserved.

Ex-chief of Scientology mission quits church

By BETTY BRENNER
Journal religion editor

The Rev. Enid Vien, former director of the Church of Scientology's Flint mission, has resigned from the church. Her letter of resignation is strongly critical of the church's operation.

Her letter, submitted after nearly 18 years as a Scientologist and a minister since 1967, says in part:

"I can no longer support a church that bleeds its parishioners, abuses its staff, uses fear tactics to insure everyone at least pretends to

agree and engages upon coercive tactics to sew its missions up."

Other excerpts from her letter: "...my life's work as a minister with the church has been casually endangered due to what I perceive as greed....our religion is endangered from within....fascistic behavior is still fascism even though disguised as zeal, and that is not Scientology. In such hands, the Tech (Scientology technology) is dangerous."

Vien is now in California.

The Journal received a copy of Vien's letter from an anti-cult or-

ganization in Redondo Beach, Calif., called Citizens Freedom Foundation. It was not dated and was a photocopied version of a typewritten copy of what she originally wrote longhand. However, its authenticity was verified by Vien in a telephone call from California and by others to whom she gave copies of it.

THE LETTER, she said, was written to the Church of Scientology Mission Inc., headquarters for Scientology missions, in Los Angeles in February. Since that time the

local Scientology mission has been shut and the building at 3101 Clio is for sale.

Vien said she still believes in Scientology technology and in Scientology as an applied religious philosophy. "I would not have become a minister if I didn't believe we had something to give to people."

Although she refused to say she is in hiding, ("You found me, didn't you?") she also refused to say where she is staying and called a Journal reporter collect after receiving the request for a call.

She said she knows the church is looking for her, because her friends have told her they have received inquiries about her whereabouts from church members.

"I'm not frightened," she said. "I could be if I let myself be. I'm more annoyed."

Within the Church of Scientology, she said, it is considered a "high crime" to splinter away, no matter what the provocation.

Her decision to resign, she said, came after a Journal reporter asked her in January about national press reports that the church is

being ripped by a power struggle between a small inner circle of youthful leaders and a large and growing number of disaffected former leaders and members.

SHE TOLD The Journal then she knew little about that struggle, except that there had been a management change.

But she said she began to investigate.

"I began to ask a lot of embarrassing questions and what I found

See CHURCH — A2

CHURCH

CONTINUED FROM A 1

is what you see there," she said about her letter.

Already the new management had made decisions that made it difficult for the mission here to make any money, although fees charged for Scientology services follow an "idiotic price policy," she said.

One was that those people who are "clear," a high level in Scientology training, were not to be served here, but in Scientology centers in Detroit, Los Angeles or Clearwater, Fla. Since a third of the Scientologists here are clear, that took away much of the income here, she said.

IN ADDITION, the proportion of the fees that must be sent to the national church were increased by 50 percent, she said.

The new management of the church has boosted fees (although the church says it considers them contributions) to a level that seems greedy, Vien said.

"When I first joined, they were high, but not impossible." At that time, the expenditure of \$10,000 to \$20,000 was enough to get you all the way through Scientology, she said.

Counseling for some levels at Clearwater now can cost \$4,000 for 12½ hours, she said. "They have started raising them every month. Only people in professional positions can do it now."

She had not intended that the mission here be shut, Vien said. Instead, she had planned to reopen it as an independent center called the Church of Science of Life.

She had organized a new corporation under that name, she said, and had transferred the ownership of the building to that corporation. Although the building formerly was officially in the church's name, it was her money that was invested in it, she said.

But, after her resignation, she said, some Scientologists here intentionally discredited her and it became obvious that the mission would not receive enough financial support to keep operating. It had already been in financial trouble, she said.

Vien said she did not resign to travel, as The Journal had been told at the time. She called that "a fabrication."

Because she could not operate the mission, she offered it back to the church. When the church refused it, she decided to sell it, she said.

She arrived in California almost broke, she said.

In her letter of resignation, Vien said, "I have seen loyal mission holders of many years' service excommunicated on what I believe to be trumped up charges, depriving them of their livelihood and the fruits of their labors."

She also wrote, "I do not believe LRH (L. Ron Hubbard, the founder) intended such abuse and this causes me grave misgivings about his safety."

HUBBARD has not been seen in public since 1980 and his son, who has changed his name to Ronald DeWolf, has charged in a California court suit that his father is either dead or mentally incapable of handling his fortune.

In her telephone call, Vien said a tape, purportedly of his voice, sent a few months ago to Scientology churches and missions, "didn't sound like him. If it was him, something was awfully wrong." The latest writings that are supposed to be his also do not read like his, she said.

She hopes to continue using the Scientology technology, she said,

but would not say how or where.

"I have to get my life together. After 18 years in your church to find yourself outside is not easy. It is exciting but I feel a little lost."

Scientologists believe that through the technology of the church they can confront and erase emotional and psychological blockages that cause loneliness, guilt, depression, inhibitions, compulsions and other human limitations.

The core of the technology is an E-meter, a device much like a polygraph that records physical reactions to questions. What the church terms counseling is answering a series of questions from an "auditor" while holding the E-meter.

When the E-meter reading shows no reaction to a question, the person being counseled is considered "cleared," or freed of that limitation.

On the telephone, Vien was asked about a comment from Michelle Sudz, president of the Michigan Church of Scientology, that Vien was not following proper Scientology procedure when she acted as an auditor for a Flint-area physician who tried to commit suicide.

"Insinuating I didn't know what the treatment is, when I've been a minister since 1967, is a bit much," she said.

She added that picking scapegoats for Scientology problems is typical. "The pattern was to go to a mission and say they are doing all these bad things and that they have been doing all those bad things all along."