

Scientology and Dr. 'Jane Smith' **The case of a physician and her suicide attempt**

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A Flint-area physician who once had a promising career is now in a Colorado rehabilitation center, unable to take care of herself or communicate, the result of a suicide attempt.

Her doctors report she may have suffered permanent brain damage from a self-administered overdose of insulin.

Family members, her psychologist and her associates say she had been emotionally unstable for some time. They contend the local Church of Scientology and the Michigan Purification Project, a detoxification program, aggravated her condition.

Glenn C. Currier, a local Scientology spokesman and owner of the Purification Project, denied that Scientology or his business had anything to do with her problems.

MICHELLE SUDZ, president of the Michigan Church of Scientology, however, says she has some doubts about the quality of the treatment the doctor received at the Flint Scientology mission. (See story on Page A9.)

In the three months before her attempted suicide on New Year's Day, the doctor's fi-

nancial records show, she paid more than \$10,000 to the mission and \$700 to the Purification Project.

Relatives, attempting to recover some of the money, have been given back \$2,500, with promises of more to come.

The doctor, in her 30s, spent thousands of dollars for Scientology's "auditing" program,

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which some describe as using "brainwashing" techniques.

In auditing, persons are asked questions about their private life while hooked up to a lie detector-type device called an "E-meter" that measures emotional reaction. They are questioned about what bothers them until all of their problems are "cleared."

The Federal Food and Drug Administration in 1963 accused Scientology of making false claims that the E-meter would improve health, intelligence, ability and behavior, according to the St. Petersburg Times.

A judge who reviewed the FDA's claims said in 1973 there was "absolutely no scientific or medical basis in fact for the claimed cures attributed to E-meter auditing."

THAT JUDGE RULED that the church could no longer advertise its services as a scientific cure of disease, that it must label its E-meters as ineffective in treating illnesses and that it could only use the meters in "bona fide religious counseling."

Because the federal judge ruled that Scientology was entitled to First Amendment protection as a religion and could use the meters, the church hailed his decision as a victory, the Florida paper reported.

The doctor's mother told the Journal her daughter said she was prepared to spend at least \$20,000 to "go clear."

On Dec. 14, Dr. Jane Lord Smith (not her real name) entered a New York City mental health clinic. (Because there is a slight chance Dr. Smith may recover someday, her

family does not want her identified in this story. The names of her relatives have also been changed.)

Family members and friends say local Scientology officials made Dr. Smith feel so guilty about seeking professional help that she failed to seek it in time.

On Dec. 22, Dr. Smith wrote a suicide note while she was in the New York clinic, where she was receiving counseling and engaging in scream therapy.

SHE HAD ADMITTED herself to the clinic after relatives and friends became concerned about her talk about suicide. The note makes it clear Dr. Smith felt neither the scream therapy nor Scientology had any value for her.

"The grief (over a former boyfriend getting married that week) becomes worse rather than better with screaming," she said. "My friends & family have been very supportive — my thanks to all."

"The staff at Areba (the New York clinic) has been most professional and very good. No one, however, can help me and I appar-

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DR. SMITH

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ently can't help myself. I have been in turmoil during the last five years — and I can't seem to stop that turmoil.

"I would like to say that I'm sure therapy & Scientology have merit & value with the right person doing the work. At present, I can't assign it any value for me & that might be because I don't have the right tool to work with when working with me. I can't find the stuff inside me to keep going. I have lost the will." (Her emphasis)

On New Year's Day, the day after checking herself out of the clinic, Dr. Smith tried to kill herself.

CURRIER SAYS Dr. Smith was fine until she left for New York. He blamed the mental health profession and her family for her suicide attempt.

"It (the suicide attempt) was a surprise to all of us," he said.

Currier said he believes Dr. Smith got her money's worth from Scientology.

According to Sudz, however, the family is entitled to at least \$4,000 back because Dr. Smith did not receive all of the auditing she paid for. The family has already received a refund of \$2,500.

Currier said he could not explain why the doctor would criticize Scientology in her suicide note when she always said only good things about it to him.

He also denied that the local mission took advantage of an ill woman to get money from her, as contended by members of Dr. Smith's family and her associates.

"Not a chance," Currier said. "I don't know of any Scientologist who would do that."

LAST SPRING, Dr. Smith, described as a hard-working, respectable physician with a growing practice, went through a painful divorce.

In the aftermath, relatives and friends said, she apparently felt unloved, and that feeling increased when she experienced another unsuccessful relationship.

Last summer, she started engaging in what family members said amounted to obsessive behavior, such as playing golf and riding her bicycle nearly all of her free time. Her moods shifted up and down frequently, and family members say it was obvious even then that she was mentally ill.

In September, she signed up for a "purification" program at a local health spa under supervision of the Michigan Purification Project, which has since opened an office at 526 S. Saginaw. She wrote a \$700 check on the project on Sept. 18.

The "purification" program claims it can flush chemicals and drugs out of people's bodies using an exercise-sauna-and-vitamin regi-

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— Her brother

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men invented by the controversial founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer.

However, medical and drug abuse authorities interviewed by The Journal for a February article expressed doubts about the purification program and its claims. That same article suggested that such programs are recruiting fronts for Scientology, a claim that Currier has denied.

CURRIER SAID, however, that he did refer Dr. Smith to the local Scientology mission. He said she had complained of feeling depressed about the way a relationship with an old boyfriend turned out.

According to Sudz, Currier was entitled to a 10 percent commission on that referral.

Dr. William Lord (again, not his real name), said his sister told him that she was going through the purification program last fall.

"I told her that I figured it was a bunch of crap," he said. "There's no way spending four or five hours in a sauna and taking all those vitamins is going to get rid of PBB. After I said that, she stopped talking to me about it."

Scientology teaches its members to avoid people who criticize their program.

Asked why Dr. Smith, a medical person with a knowledge of body chemistry, would be willing to go through such a program, Dr. Lord said:

"Jane was in such a poor state of mind — she was grasping for straws. She had been depressed for some time and she was looking for anything to make her feel better."

A SEPT. 21 NOTE addressed to Dr. Smith, signed by Currier, says:

"Congratulations (sic) on a good day yesterday. Here is a book that Enid would like you to read. See you later. Love, Glenn."

Enid Vlen was minister of the local Scientology mission and one of the three incorporators, along with Currier and Ellen Edmondson, of the Purification Project.

Several Scientology books, tapes and pamphlets were found inside Dr. Smith's house. A few of the books contain critical references to the mental health profession.

Although the "purification" process is supposed to be a two- to three-week program, Dr. Smith finished the program early.

"She said she was feeling better, and feeling better about herself, but she didn't show any signs of any personality change for the better," her brother said.

Her claims of feeling better "looked to me like a facade, to try to make herself feel better," he said.

DR. SMITH'S sister, M: Loraine Lord, is also a doctor, practicing medicine in another state. She said she frequently talked to her sister on the telephone last fall.

"I noticed personality changes after the purification program. She was more depressed and withdrawn, more focused on her own problems, her loneliness."

On Sept. 27, nine days after she wrote a \$700 check to the Purification Project, Dr. Smith wrote the first of six checks to the Flint mission or its affiliated programs. It was for \$3,362.50.

A letter on Michigan Purification Project stationery, dated Nov. 16, and signed by Edmondson, makes it clear the Purification Project wanted Dr. Smith to function as their staff physician.

The letter reads in part:

"Our Purification Project is in need of a doctor that knows and understands our program and can treat clients who need a pre-program physical or need to seek medical care during the course of the program.

"HAVING DONE the Purification yourself, you realize that many physical and emotional phenomena can come up... Because the Purification is somewhat outside the range of accepted medical practice, you can't imagine how a doctor who is uninformed might react when presented with a patient who is on the program."

"It is possible that such a physician would advise the person off the Purification, to that person's detriment, as once the program is begun it's essential to continue it."

Although Currier said Dr. Smith never did any work for them, she apparently agreed to do some work for the Purification Project, as her medical colleagues said they did a couple of physicals for the project when she was not available.

Meanwhile, Dr. Smith began auditing sessions, and one of her associates became worried about her.

"I saw her becoming more depressed and inappropriate in her behavior; she was telling complete strangers all about her problems in great detail. She looked physically tired and emotionally flat," the doctor said.

That doctor and another professional colleague said they knew their friend was having some severe problems, and one said he convinced her to see a therapist.

"JANE HAD agreed to see a good therapist, a friend of mine, in Florida for two weeks," he said. "She changed her mind after one night with her Scientology auditor. She told me that her auditor said going to Florida would work against everything they were trying to do for her."

Scientology has long maintained a hostility against the entire mental

Glenn C. Currier blamed the mental health profession and her family for her suicide attempt.

health field, and prohibits its members from engaging in psychoanalysis or psychiatry while undergoing auditing.

On Dec. 5, Dr. Smith paid \$4,750 for auditing sessions. The Scientology mission receipt was signed by Ellen Edmondson, the Purification Project's medical director, who says she is a registered nurse. Currier said Edmondson was at the mission in December doing volunteer work.

In January, Glenn Currier, as owner of the Purification Project, denied in a Journal interview that the project business had any connection with Scientology.

Edmondson, who once also denied to a Journal reporter that she was a Scientologist, was present during that interview. Yet, at one time, Edmondson was assistant minister of the local Scientology mission.

THE LOCAL MISSION, at 3101 Clio Rd., closed in late February for "reorganization" and was to reopen in mid-March but did not. For a time, it was referring questions about that action to Currier.

Family members and friends say they recall Dr. Smith telling them that "Glenn and Ellen" were intending to move in with her and that they were helping her straighten out her finances. The family spokesmen said Dr. Smith later had second thoughts about allowing them to live with her.

Currier claims Dr. Smith wanted them to move in with her. "There was no reason to move in with her," he said.

He acknowledged he and Edmondson had helped her with her finances, but said it was only because she asked for help.

An ex-Scientologist now working against the church, Ford Schwartz, of California, says both of these moves are common Scientology ploys to find out how much money a person has, and then get it.

An undated note, signed "Ellen," was found in Dr. Smith's car after her suicide attempt. It reads:

"DON'T MAKE any plans for tonight — I'll cook dinner for us & we can make plans for going to see your stock broker, accountant, etc. I think you need time to unwind from your trip home before you start being a social butterfly again! And as you know, I am very dull and easy to be around! Besides, Glenn would like to see you. So, please call the Purif 234-5533, (and) I'll be there until 6 p.m. Love, Ellen."

Late in the year, Dr. Smith started talking about suicide, according to Dr. Lord's wife, Catherine.

"She appeared to be getting more and more depressed," Mrs. Lord said. "On Dec. 11, she came over very depressed and shared with me her thoughts about suicide. She said she came very close to killing herself and that frightened her."

Mrs. Lord said there is no doubt in her mind that Dr. Smith's mental health started declining more after she became involved with Scientology.

Along with other family members, Mrs. Lord said she encouraged Dr. Smith to get professional counseling.

But Mrs. Lord said Dr. Smith seemed confused about what to do and unable to make up her mind.

DR. SMITH'S mother, who is also a doctor, said she is convinced that her daughter was "brain-washed" by the Scientology church.

"She wasn't thinking for herself. I'm sure," her mother said. "I always gave her credit for making sensible decisions — they got her to a point where they took advantage of her, because she's a trusting person."

Two weeks before she attempted suicide, one of her colleagues convinced her to enter the New York City clinic, the Areba-Casriel Institute.

"The morning she was to leave for New York (Dec. 14), I was at her house helping her pack," the doctor said. "Jane called the woman (named Ellen) who was helping her with her bills and told her that she was leaving in 15 or 20 minutes for this clinic. A few minutes later, her 'auditor' (named Enid) called and Jane started getting very upset."

"I was sitting right next to Jane and heard this woman tell her that 'It is unethical for you to go to New York.' Jane got very shook up and I remember her telling this woman that she wanted to see her when she got back. It was like hearing a little girl pleading with her mother."

"SHE WAS COMPLETELY broken when we flew together to New York. She was completely depressed."

Later, the doctor said:

"These people took a lot of money from her and then made her feel guilty about seeking help."

"I feel that Scientology and this Michigan Purification Project directly contributed to her deteriorating mental condition and, more importantly, prevented her from getting the kind of traditional therapy that could have helped her in time."

A psychologist, Dr. Glenn E. Bell, had been treating Dr. Smith on and off for three years.

Bell said he only had one visit with Dr. Smith last fall, and that was the day before she left for New York City. He described her as resembling a dependent little girl who was incoherent and desperately seeking outside help.

He said she mentioned that she had gone through Scientology and found that it had not helped her.

"I've treated a few of their failures in the past," he said. "They take on desperate souls, people who could be led by the hand by anyone. This group (Scientology) capitalizes on these people."

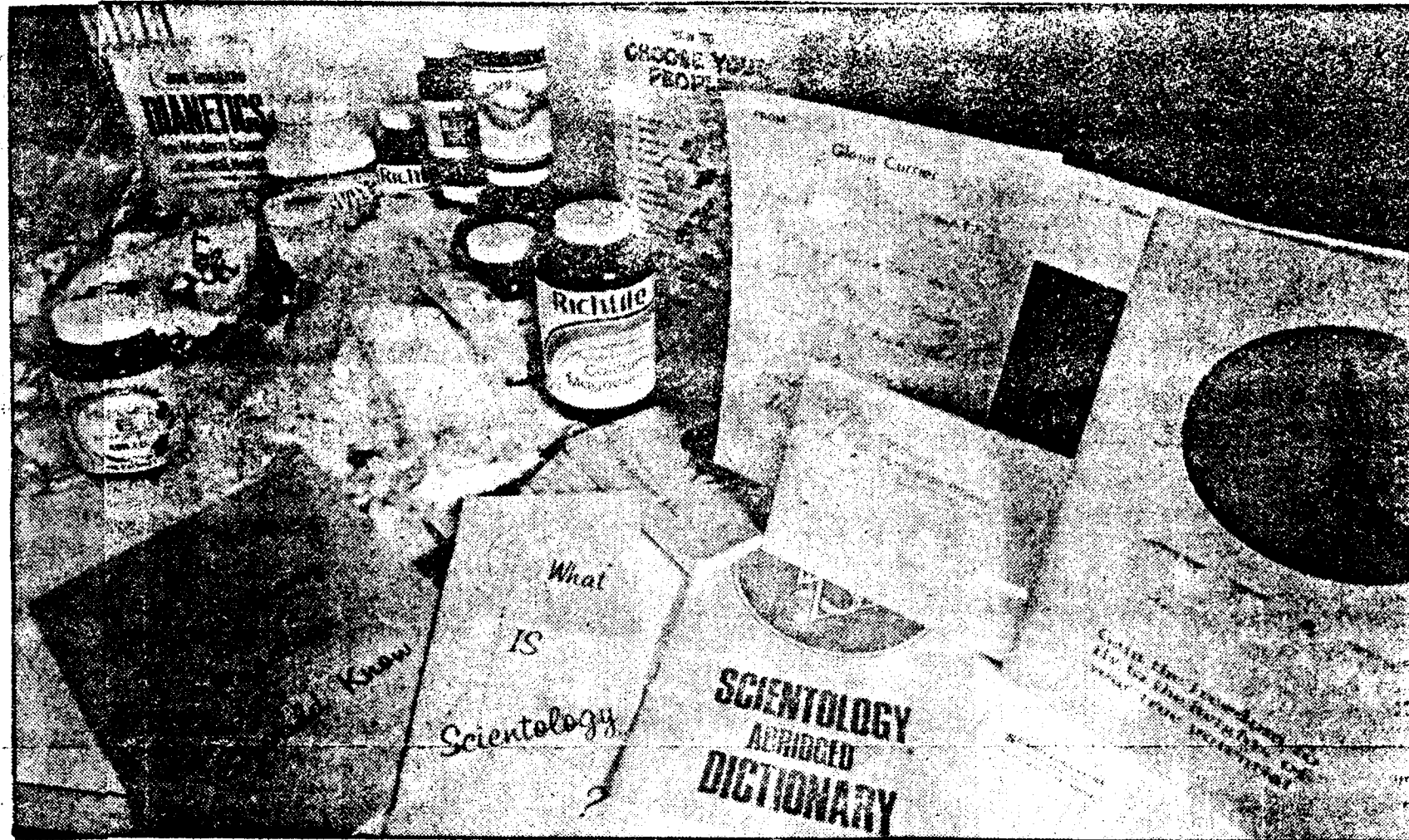
BELL SAID HE is certain Dr. Smith could not have handled Scientology's intense confrontational techniques in her mental state last fall.

"I myself am completely negative to Scientology. I admit my bias," he said. "They aren't professionals in this field and they aren't equipped to handle people with severe problems."

Dr. Bell said it appears the Scientologists promised Dr. Smith that they could help her and her depression and solve her problems quickly.

"No healer, no therapy, could offer that kind of fast care," he said. "They were selling something that was impossible to deliver."

"I can't say Scientology caused her suicide attempt," he said. "All I can say is that she tried their methods and they didn't work for her. Once you realize nothing is working, you are apt to say the hell with life."



JOURNAL PHOTO

Vitamins, minerals and Scientology literature found in the home of Dr. 'Jane Lord Smith.'