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Horror story told in sect suit

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CLEARWATER—Possibly the highest-ranking, most influential Scientologist to defect from the Clearwater-based, international sect has sued Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard for more than \$225 million.

Citing physical abuse, the intentional infliction of emotional distress, false imprisonment and the violation of his civil rights, Howard D. "Homer" Schomer, the 49-year-old former treasury secre-

tary of the sect's Author Services Inc. branch, is demanding a jury trial and damages of \$226,528,200.

Schomer's claims, if proved true, offer a dark view of the inner workings of an arm of the most visible yet secretive of the world's "new religions."

Named in the suit, filed in U.S. District Court of Los Angeles, are Hubbard, Author Services Inc., and two executives of ASI, David Miscavige and Pat Broeker.

"What is so important about the suit is that this is the very first

time that ASI, Miscavige and Broeker have been sued," noted Boston attorney Michael Flynn, who represents a number of other former sect members in suits against the Church of Scientology. "Also important is that this time the suit is not against the church, but rather a for-profit organization."

Hubbard, however, has been the subject of several multimillion-dollar lawsuits.

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* Suit—

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Schomer's suit alleges that he, having voiced reservations about Hubbard's true aims and those of his myriad of organizations, was subjected to intense interrogations for hours at a time, denied food and water, accused of stealing money and being an FBI or CIA agent, spat upon, threatened with bodily harm, locked up under guard and told he would be "falsely thrown in jail."

Schomer fled the sect in December 1982, and went into seclusion before filing his suit on Oct. 25.

"I was frightened because I didn't know what was happening and terrified of what they could do," Schomer said during an interview Friday. "I was threatened with injury and with going to court because they said they would bring false witness against me.

"And it still terrifies me what they can do to me, and that's why I didn't come forward sooner. But I realized that eventually I had to do something, so I came out in the open. And I guess that makes me, as one who was in ASI, the highest-ranking official who has ever come out to talk in public."

Author Services Inc. is a Los Angeles for-profit organization created and controlled by Hubbard, according to court documents. Former members say ASI is the organizational head of the sect's numerous ventures.

"Many of the top trusted leaders of the church were placed in ASI to run the church, but to also run Hubbard's affairs," Flynn said last week. Schomer concurred.

"It was an effort to separate Hubbard's affairs from the church, but also to keep him in control," Flynn said. "So they set up an independent corporation so they could run his affairs and the church's affairs."

Schomer's claims reveal many facets of the internal operations of ASI, the Church of Scientology and its many affiliated organizations which—if true—paint Hubbard as a charlatan who, using ASI, "skimmed millions of dollars from the Scientology Organizations."

The papers also state that ASI "laundered" money through a law firm, that "Hubbard diverted over 100 million dollars from Scientology Organizations to bank accounts controlled by him" and that in March 1982, Hubbard was receiving more than \$200,000 a week in royalties from sect organizations.

"This figure increased until some weeks Hubbard received over 1 million dollars a week," the suit alleges. "Hubbard's personal estate within ASI grew from 10 million dollars to over 40 million dollars."

Schomer was first introduced to Scientology in May 1968, and two years later joined the sect's elite "Sea Org."

In his complaint, Schomer states he "devoted thirteen years of his life to Hubbard and the Scientology Organizations," including spending \$20,000 on services. He states he quit his job, sold his car, home and possessions and left his 9-year-old daughter to work 15 hours a day, seven days a week for \$12 to \$25 a week because he believed in Hubbard's claims about his life and accomplishments.

But in time, Schomer found reason to doubt Hubbard's background, achievements and grandiose claims.

On March 22, 1982, Schomer became the treasury secretary of ASI. As such, the papers state, he was responsible for all bank accounts, opening new accounts, overseeing audits of Hubbard's assets, keeping financial records, paying bills and monitoring investment returns.

With such access to the internal operation of ASI, Schomer states, he learned of misrepresentations about Hubbard, the sect and other widely held beliefs dealing with Scientology. Consequently, he developed "serious differences of opinion about the practices and doctrines of the Church of Scientology" and made those reservations known.

It was then, the suit states, that the alleged abuses began.

According to the suit:

David Miscavige, Pat Broeker and others took Schomer from his room on Oct. 28, 1982, and interrogated him for more than 10 hours. He was denied food and water and accused of working for "enemies" of the sect.

During the interrogation, called a "sec check," Miscavige spat tobacco juice in Schomer's face and told him: "I'm going to fix you." Miscavige told Schomer that if he did not "come clean," Miscavige would see that Schomer "was thrown in jail by having 'witnesses' falsely accuse (Schomer) of having committed crimes."

"I hadn't openly spoke out," Schomer recalled, "but when Hubbard started losing money in deals, he suspected I had something to do with it. And I had expressed some desire to leave, but felt I was trapped."

The suit continues:

Schomer subsequently was placed under guard for two days, locked up and unable to "contact the outside world." But Schomer "escaped" and traveled to Miami, only to return to sect headquarters Nov. 10 "because of his concern for the security of his daughter."

He was placed under guard again and not permitted to leave. But he "escaped the CSC (Church of Scientology of California) compound on December 23, 1982, and went to Boulder, Colorado," where he now lives.

According to interviews with former Scientologists:

David Miscavige, 23, is said to be at once one of the youngest yet most powerful of Hubbard's intimates. He was introduced to Scientology at the age of 8 when his family moved to England.

A diminutive man who suffers from asthma, Miscavige eventually moved to "Flag Land Base" in Clearwater, was put on the staff of Hubbard's Commodore's Messenger Organization (CMO) in 1976, and was assigned to the sect's Special Unit a year later. (The Special Unit consists of those who work directly for Hubbard.)

In time, Miscavige became involved in sect management on an

international basis and was assigned to the position of CMO Action Aid International and eventually to ASI.

Pat Broeker, 35, also one of Hubbard's personal aides, joined the sect's elite "Sea Org" in 1970, where he worked in the Finance Banking Office.

By 1975, Broeker was working with Hubbard's personal messengers on the sect's flagship, the Apollo, and was responsible for communicating Hubbard's orders and wishes to other staff members.

Hubbard, according to a former sect insider, called Broeker "a very irresponsible and unstable character (who) could not make decisions on his own." Nonetheless, observed Hubbard: "Those types have their uses."

Broeker traveled to Hubbard's Hemet, Calif., home of seclusion to work at his side, which subsequently led to his lofty position within ASI.

Neither Miscavige nor sect President Heber Jentzsch returned telephone calls last week, and the *Clearwater Sun* was unable to reach Broeker. However, the sect issued an unsigned press release in which it called the court action "an old lawsuit and

old news.

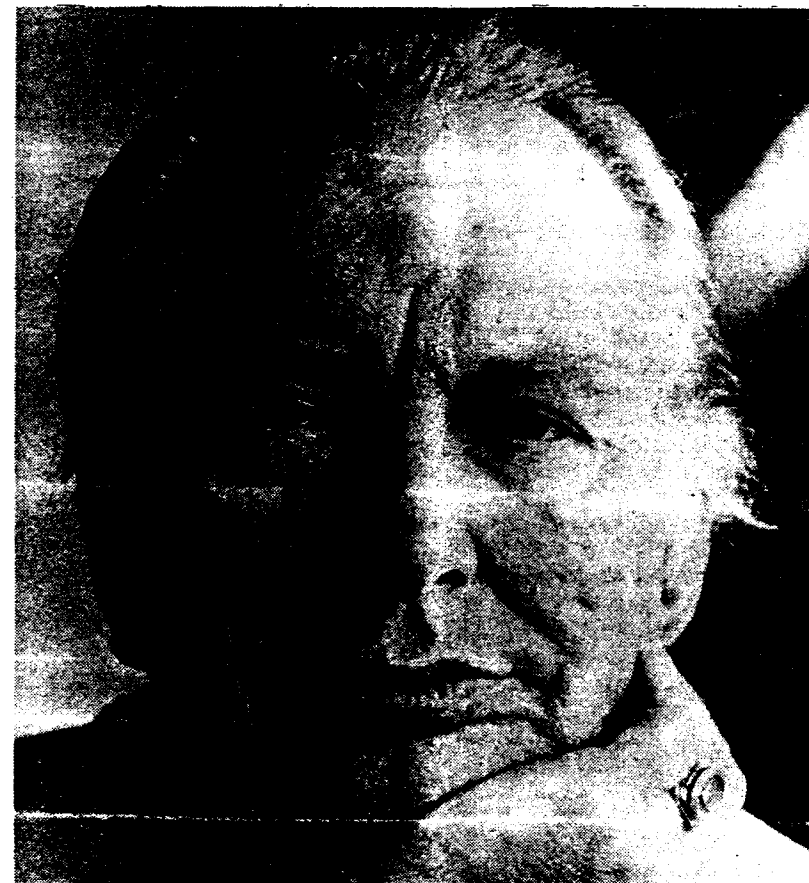
"This suit is part of a government conspiracy of the IRS and a Boston lawyer who are seeking to destroy religion for and in the name of the psychiatrists they work for."

Although Schomer, in the latter part of his 13 years in the sect, rarely if ever dealt with Hubbard, the 73-year-old writer is named in the suit because he was judged to be the "alter ego" of Scientology in a court case earlier this year, and thus is responsible for the actions of his brainchild.

"(Schomer) suffered (the aforementioned alleged actions) because he had been deceived as to Hubbard's qualifications and abilities and the true nature of Hubbard and the Scientology organizations," the complaint reads.

"The representations were part of an elaborate scheme to obtain monies and assets by creating organizations for allegedly tax-exempt purposes and subsequently," the complaint continues, "ordering the payment of such assets for (Hubbard's) personal use.

"To implement such a plan, Hubbard organized Scientology Organizations throughout the world that have fraudulently obtained hundreds of millions of dol-



Sect founder L. Ron Hubbard is the subject of the lawsuit.

lars since their creation."

"It's terrifying," Schomer said Friday. "Here's a church preach-

ing the 'clearing' of the planet for the betterment of mankind, but they do things like this."