

SINKING THE MASTER MARINER

Report by John Barnes
Photographs by Nik Wheeler

“Corrupt, sinister and dangerous” were the words used to describe the Church of Scientology in a judgment given by Mr Justice Latey this summer. He also referred to it as “immoral and socially obnoxious”. But who controls the Church now? A major *Sunday Times Magazine* investigation into the activities of the cult in America and Britain has uncovered a disturbing and extraordinary story — the takeover of the organisation by a small band of youthful fanatics following the disappearance of the Church’s founder and inspiration, L. Ron Hubbard.



Three best-known pictures of Hubbard from a TV documentary, in 1973 (above) and 1979 (centre). The Scientology headquarters in Los Angeles (left)

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The temperature must have been well over 100°F, a dry burning heat that shimmered the figures on the roof. They were dressed in faded blue denim, heads bare under the sun. One looked towards the road and our car. But the guard below yelled and the man bent his head back to his work of resurfacing the roof. My companion in the car said quietly, "That's a Rehabilitation Project Force. They're RPFers, psychological prisoners - slave labour, in a way."

This was America, summer 1984, on a major highway between the southern Californian city of Riverside and the millionaires' playground of Palm Springs. Here, in the cactus hamlet of Gillman Hot Springs, where the masts of a \$565,000 clipper ship sway incongruously in the desert winds, is the

world headquarters of the Church of Scientology.

Yet the great helmsman of this bizarre cult was not on board. No one knows for sure whether L. Ron Hubbard, the 74-year-old founder, is even alive. His round, smiling face gazes down from the walls of more than 100 Scientology offices around the world, Orders are given in his name, but he hasn't been seen in nearly five years. He may be in seclusion, as Church leaders claim, or he may be, as recent defectors believe, either dead or in failing health and under the control of half a dozen young followers who are manipulating his fortune.

These are the children. Well, actually they are in their early 20s now. But they were only 11, 12, 13-year-olds when Hubbard, haunted by fear of enemies, was

sailing the world's oceans aboard a 3280-tonne converted British ferryboat called the *Apollo*. Some 500 scientologists, many of them English, took their children with them aboard the boat. Hubbard was the Commodore. The kids were the elite "Commodore Messenger Org."

"They were mostly good-looking girls, smart, too," said Bent Corydon, a New Zealander who had been in the Church for over 20 years and had run his own Scientology mission on a franchise basis. "They weren't much use to the ship particularly, so Hubbard used them as his eyes and ears, spies really, running around, asking questions, observing things. They were considered to be Hubbard himself and any discourtesy to them was regarded as a personal discourtesy to Hubbard. By the time they all got off the

boat in 1975, most of the girls had been replaced by teenage boys. The worst part was when these kids started turning in their parents, getting them 'declared' [purged] as 'suppressives' - that's evil people, to translate Church language."

By the mid-Seventies, Scientology's aggressive proselytising had attracted, by its own account, more than 6 million followers around the world. It had also earned the enmity of numerous governments, including Britain's, and many hundreds of disillusioned individuals who claimed they had been hoodwinked by high-pressure Church salesmen into spending thousands of dollars on Scientology programmes. As authorities began cracking down, the Church's leader found his boat no longer welcome in Mediterranean and Atlantic ports. ➡

SCIENTOLOGISTS: THE KIDS TAKE OVER
Hubbard decided it was time to go home.

He dropped anchor in Clearwater, a quiet beach town on the Gulf of Mexico just west of Tampa, Florida. On October 27, 1975, the central Fort Harrison Hotel, which rises 11 storeys over Tampa Bay, was bought for \$2.3 million by an unknown company called Southern Land Sales and Development with money from a Luxembourg bank. A few days later paid \$500,000 for the next-door Bank of Clearwater building. Only after a newspaper investigation did the true identity of the buyer emerge.

By the summer of 1976 about 1500 Scientologists, including some 800 full-time staff members, had moved into their new headquarters, which they described in colour brochures as a "religious retreat" and the "friendliest place in the whole world". Ron Hubbard, in green tam-o'shanter, was seen directing training films in the grounds. Always at his side was a slim, intense-looking teenager named David Miscavige, smartly dressed in the naval uniform of the Commodore Messenger Org.

In a confidential memo, Hubbard issued orders to his staff to turn a section of the Fort Harrison Hotel into a hide-away for himself. But June 1976, Hubbard flew instead to California, first living in a Church-owned apartment complex in Hemet, a small town at the foot of the San Jacinto Mountains. His top aides set up headquarters on the golf course of a country club they bought in Gillman Hot Springs on the edge of the Mojave Desert, a few miles from Hemet.

By this time, Hubbard had become a "Hughesian kind of creature" (a reference to the reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes in his final years), according to Gerry Armstrong, who had been a member of Hubbard's "family unit" from 1971 until 1980. "I saw him deteriorate both physically and mentally," said Armstrong, who claimed that one of his tasks was to shuttle suitcases stuffed with \$50 bills to various Hubbard accounts in Liberia, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.

Armstrong said that his boss talked to no one but the young Messengers who had been with him since their childhood days aboard the *Apollo*. "He was child-like and bullying." He had also become a "hypochondriac," said Armstrong, terrified of germs, taking injections of drug and vitamins.

About a dozen senior Scientologists lived in the apartment complex with Hubbard. One of them was David Mayo, who was Hubbard's personal auditor (confessor) and the Church's leading authority on its philosophy. A 22-year Scientology veteran, Mayo earned his place at the top of the hierarchy through his close friendship with Hubbard. But in February, 1980, Mayo left for a two-week visit to his native New Zealand. When he returned, Hubbard had vanished.

The young naval-uniformed Commodore Messenger Org had pulled a pre-emptive coup for control of the Church



Hubbard (top) and protégé, Miscavige (below) shooting a recruiting film

and its finances. "It was like *Lord of the Flies*," said Mayo. "The kids - fanatics, all of them - had taken over."

Hubbard disappeared in the company of Ann Broeker, an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties who had been with him during his *Apollo* days, and her husband, Pat. Ex-Scientologists who know the Broekers describe them as personable, articulate, good-looking and slavishly devoted to Ron Hubbard, the kind of people he loves to have around.

No Scientologists except for the Broekers have seen him since. The three of them are believed to be living in a southern California beach town. But it is no more than a guess, based on Hubbard's love of the ocean and the time it has taken for one of the Broekers to rendezvous with Church leaders to give them instructions from their leader.

From their 500-acre estate in Gillman Hot Springs on the edge of the desert, the new commanders of Scientology planned the removal of those they perceived as their enemies within the Church. The place looks more like a prison camp than the headquarters of a religion. Brown-shirted guards scrutinise passing cars through binoculars. A golf course, abandoned and gone to seed, is lined with NO TRESPASSING signs. A notice outside a black wrought-iron gate says GOLDEN ERA STUDIOS. Set back from the road are rows of one storey buildings with blue roofs.

It is not advisable to stop and stare. During our visit the guards didn't seem to be inhibited by the fact that the road passing the Church headquarters is a California State Highway. One banged on

the boot of my car. Two others chattered away on walkie-talkies. I could see another holding an animated discussion on the phone in the guardhouse by the gate. I drove on. A guard on a motorcycle pulled in behind us. As I passed another guardhouse a mile along the road, a young man with a movie camera jumped out on to the highway and filmed.

"These lads get \$17 a week plus board and lodging," said Bent Corydon. "They live in dormitories and study Scientology when they're not working. There's no television. Once a month, a Church van takes them into Riverside for an evening at the movies. Why do they do it? They signed 'billion-year' contracts to become members of Ron's Sea Org. He's promised them that they will join him in future incarnations."

But these are merely the troops. The commanders, dressed in black pseudo-naval-officer uniforms, live in comfortable bungalows around a swimming pool, close to a replica of a masted ship's deck that carries a bronze plaque dedicated to "L. Ron Hubbard, Master Mariner". The new leader is 22-year-old David Miscavige, who became a Scientologist at the age of 12 aboard the *Apollo*. He has had no education since then except for Scientology. Consequently, he speaks a language that is more Scientology org-speak than English.

Miscavige took over control of the Church in June of 1981. He had never held any position in the Church hierarchy. He was merely one of the Messengers who served in Hubbard's entourage. But as a cameraman, he

gained a privileged place in the pecking order because he was constantly by Hubbard's side when they were film-making.

At first, the young Messengers shared power at Scientology's headquarters. According to one of them, Miscavige seized control of the Church and its assets with breathtaking simplicity. He handed the then Commanding Officer, Diane Voegeding, a message supposedly written by Ron Hubbard, ordering her to resign her post. It was signed "##", which is the way Hubbard has signed his communications for the past four years for fear that his real signature could be used against him in the multitude of legal actions that have been brought against the Church. The order was hand-carried to Gillman Hot Springs by Ann Broeker. Until then her main function had been to look after Hubbard, wash his clothes and cook his food.

Diane Voegeding said that Hubbard disappeared because he feared he would be caught up in a trial in which one of his former Messengers, Tanya Burden, claimed that she had been forced to be his serf from the age of 14. The Broekers went with him because it was felt that senior Church officials couldn't be spared. "What a mistake we made," said Voegeding. "We should have realised that whoever controlled communications with Hubbard controlled the Church."

In fact, it's a troika. While ultimate power now rests with the Broekers, it is their friend David Miscavige who wields it. The current Commanding Officer, Commodore Messenger Office, is Marc Yager, a close friend and supporter.

Yet Miscavige holds no official position in the Church of Scientology. At the beginning of January 1982, he formed a new corporation called the Religious Technology Center, which controls Hubbard's copyrights, techniques and signature. Other RTC trustees are Vicky Aznaran, Deputy Inspector-General; Lyman Spurling and Warren McShane.

Five months later the same people incorporated a separate body called the Church of Spiritual Technology, enabling them to transfer the trademarks for only \$100 if the Church came under attack. The Church of Spiritual Technology has authority over RTC.

Directly below Miscavige in the hierarchy are other young turks, mostly in their mid-20s: Yager; Vicky Aznaran and her husband Rick, Chief of Security; Steve Marlowe, Inspector General, Religious Technology Center, and Commander Wendell Reynolds, International Finance Dictator.

RPFers, the Church's labour force, tend to their every need - cleaning house, waiting at table, washing dishes, forbidden to talk, moving at a run.

Bent Corydon explained why the RPFers don't simply escape. "Most of these guys are in their 30s or 40s. They've never known anything else in their adult lives except Scientology. Some of them were very big in the

SCIENTOLOGY: the old guard is purged hierarchy - maybe in the top 10 or 20 in the whole Church. They believe in Scientology. The fact is they don't know what hit them. One moment they were in charge, the next they're on their hands and knees scrubbing floors. They faced a Spanish Inquisition-type tribunal: they had either 'squirrelled the tech' [heresy - misinterpreting Church doctrine] or had 'ripped off the orgs' [the worst sin of all - keeping money taken from Scientologists who had paid for courses or auditing instead of giving it to the Church].

"RPF sentences can last two or three years, depending on the crime," said Corydon. "They're convinced that when Ron hears about the miscarriage of justice they'll get cleared or at least get a fair hearing, but that never happens. And what are they going to do? They don't have any money. They don't know anybody outside except their family and they severed those ties years ago. Anyway, they love Ron. He is their God."

As many as 2000 top Scientology staffers have been declared "suppressive persons" and expelled from the Church. And sometimes heroes have become rogues with breathtaking swiftness. On July 8, 1982, Ensign Ken Macfarlane was "highly commended" for training Scientology registrars (salesmen) on hard-sell techniques so successfully that his first graduates produced \$25,000 in their first week. But just one month later, Macfarlane was accused by the International Finance Dictator of "crimes and suppressions against the Church" and was thrown out of the organisation.

The purges have reached out to every part of the world where Scientology has taken hold, particularly in Canada, Australia, South Africa, Germany, Scandinavia and Britain. Present and former leaders of the Church are bombarding each other with costly law suits, all of them claiming to be the true guardians of Hubbard's religion.

Caught in the crossfire, the "raw public" or "wogs" (the terms often used by Church members to describe outsiders) have not been "flowing up the bridge" and emptying their bank accounts into Scientology coffers as they used to. Membership has plummeted so fast that some recent defectors believe that the Church is disintegrating. In Britain, where the Church once boasted 200,000 supporters, Michael Garside, the public relations officer at the national Scientology headquarters at East Grinstead, recently admitted that membership had fallen to around 1000.

This small Sussex town used to be a hive of Scientology activity - hundreds of staffers at the luxurious estate of Saint Hill Manor and a constant stream of Scientologists from all over the world arriving to take courses. But in recent months, East Grinstead has become a battleground between staffers (their numbers reduced to around 70) and former Church members who live in town. There have been demonstrations and arrests.



A Scientology guard patrols outside the Church's Los Angeles headquarters

Recent defectors claim that staffers have been living on low cost diets such as rice and beans because most of the British Church's £2 million-a-year income is being sent to America. In an effort to keep the money flowing, prices for Scientology courses have soared and continue to rise almost every month. It now costs £40 to buy a copy of *Dianetics*, the bible of the Church. And after the introductory £100 communications course, charges for training and counselling can run into thousands of pounds.

British banks have become increasingly reluctant to lend Scientologists money to pay for Church courses, so the Church has been using one of its own wealthy American members to act as a money-lender. Lee Lawrence, who lives in East Grinstead, has been making loans of over £5000 at interest rates of up to 30 per cent. The borrowers never even see the money. It goes straight to the Church. And Lawrence imposes "heavy penalties" if the loan repayment is even one day late. He warns those who fail to pay up that he is "quite unreasonable" and will "resort promptly to Scientology ethics and justice", which could mean a visit from the Church police.

The Church's leaders claim that they no longer indulge in the kind of excesses that made headlines a few years ago and

resulted in the jailing of members of their espionage unit, including Hubbard's wife Mary Sue. Those people, they say, have been thrown out of the Church. But recent defectors deny this.

A remarkable story is told by Jay Hurwitz, who was Commanding Officer of the Church in Los Angeles - until the summer of 1982, that is, when he was told to report to the Gillman Hot Springs headquarters for a briefing. The first night there, guards came for him in his room and dragged him off for a "sec check" (interrogation) by David Miscavige and three other leaders of the Church. "Their first question to me was 'Who is paying you?' I didn't understand what he was talking about. I was then subjected to enormous duress with statements like: 'We will stay here all night until you tell us who is running you'."

Hurwitz said that for the first five days he and others were kept locked up under guard. "We were brought our food and we slept on the floor. We had to use the same toilet facilities in the presence of one another."

Although Hurwitz didn't know it at the time, he was actually in a Scientology penal camp called "Happy Valley" in an Indian reservation several miles from Gillman Hot Springs. At least 18 other senior Scientology staffers were there at

the same time in different rooms – one of them Ron Hubbard's former closest associate, David Mayo.

Mayo had been working late on the night of August 29, 1982, in his staff quarters when guards came and took him away to Happy Valley. At his first interrogation, Miscavige told him he was going to be removed from the Church for being anti-management.

The previous winter Mayo, Corydon and 120 other senior Scientology staffers had attended a meeting in Clearwater organised by Bill Franks, the then new Executive Director International of the Church of Scientology. Its purpose was to reform the Church after the Federal bugging convictions involving Mary Sue Hubbard and to bring down the soaring cost of membership of the Church. Unknown to Franks, his own office had been bugged. In January of 1982, 15 Church security officers physically threw him out of the Clearwater building. "It was just a power grab," said Franks, who admits he used to control \$150 million in Scientology accounts in Luxembourg banks and that up to \$1 million a week was being taken in from counselling and auditing at Clearwater while he was in charge.

When Mayo faced his accusers, he readily admitted that he wanted to reform the Church. He says Miscavige told him that RPF duty was far too good for him, that he was going to suffer a lower stratum of Hell. For the next six months, he dug ditches in the desert heat, and when he wasn't digging he was often made to run around a pole.

Explaining why he submitted to such indignities, Mayo said "People will submit to unbelievable things to prevent being deprived of their spirituality. I believed in Scientology – I still do – and I felt that, as so many thousands of Scientologists around the world regarded me as the authority on the technology of the Church, it would have been as though I had admitted that all the charges against me were true."

Day after day, he was ordered to write a confession. He refused. For others out at Happy Valley, the treatment was even rougher. Hurwitz claims that three "interested parties" – Scientology jargon for those under investigation – were physically abused and spat upon while they were held by guards.

After seven weeks of isolation, Hurwitz finally signed a typed confession and walked out on to the highway, where he hitch-hiked his way to the nearest town and caught a bus to Los Angeles International Airport. Hurwitz said that several of the RPFers had their marriages broken up, that Scientology officials had "worked over" wives to make sure that they left their "suppressive" husbands.

While Hurwitz and Mayo were broiling in the sun during the summer and autumn of 1982, David Miscavige and the other new leaders of the Church were turning their attention to the owners of Scientology missions around the country. These were senior Scientologists

SCIENTOLOGY: the Finance Police get their men



Church-hired investigators unload surveillance equipment to watch their rivals

who ran franchise operations, giving 10 per cent of their take to the Church.

"I knew something was going on when we started to hear these new terms like 'finance police', 'inspector-general network' and the 'technology center'," said Bent Corydon. "And people were being excommunicated all over the place. A lot of them were people like myself, running their own missions."

In the summer of 1981, Corydon had received a visit from members of the Finance Police. They said the Finance Dictator wanted \$40,000. "They said they were going to stay in my office and charge me \$15,000 a day until I paid up. They said they were going to put me in jail. I asked them what they meant. They said: 'You'd just better damn do what you're told or you'll find out.'"

Terrified at what they might do to his family – he has a wife and two small children – Corydon paid up. But he was then sent to Clearwater to serve a six-month Rehabilitation Project Force sentence, waiting on tables and taking courses to "clear" his "doubt condition", for which he had to pay an extra \$10,000.

Corydon said he was reinstated by the Church's Executive Director, Bill Franks, who told him that he was determined to clean up Scientology to prevent the kind of excesses that had caused so much public controversy. When Franks was kicked out of the Church, Corydon knew it would be only a matter of time before the Church police arrived. He was ordered to appear in San Francisco for a meeting with the leadership of the Church at the Hilton Hotel. He says that what happened there was the most terrifying experience of his life.

It was October 17, 1982. One hundred mission holders from around the country and a number of other senior leaders of the Church were herded into a lecture hall on the fourth floor of the hotel. The door was locked and guarded by Finance Police while the young, uniformed Commodore Messengers lectured their captive audience from 7 o'clock in the evening until 2 o'clock in the morning.

Miscavige first explained that there had been a corporate reorganisation which had made the Church "impre-

nable" and, according to the Inspector-General Steve Marlowe, would put a stop to "squirrels" and "schisms". Later came a violent denunciation by International Finance Dictator Wendell Reynolds. "Collectively, you guys are in some weird lower condition. You have allowed the missions to go squirrel and I mean squirrel . . . because you guys are sitting on the public, you're ripping off the orgs. You've just had it. You see these guys standing around here. They're International Finance Police and their job is to go out and find this stuff."

To understand this org-talk, it's necessary to realise that Scientology is a money-making machine. Members pay the Church for services such as counselling and auditing to clear their "engrams" so that they're better able to solve their own problems and the world's. There are no religious services or clergymen. The job of Scientology missions is to get new recruits, sell them basic courses, then pass them on to Church-run centres for more expensive counselling and auditing. In America the basic course only costs \$50 but is looked upon as a "loss leader". The more advanced courses can cost \$300 an hour.

What had provoked the rage of the Bent Corydon, once among the leading mission holders, was ejected and, like Mayo, has started a business





Mayo, once Hubbard's confessor, is now a bitter antagonist of the Church

new young leaders of the Church of Scientology was their conviction that Church mission holders had been keeping recruits instead of passing them on to Scientology-owned centres. Not only were the missions skimming the gravy, there were suspicions that they were faking their statistics with lower body counts to reduce payments to the Church.

For seven hours, the captive audience was lectured, cajoled and denounced. "We weren't allowed to move, go to the bathroom, or speak unless spoken to," recalled Corydon. "There were only 15 of them and there were 100 of us. If we had gone for them, there was no way they could have controlled us. But we were terrorised. Right at the beginning, three mission holders were randomly picked out and expelled right there and then, their lives finished.

"We were told that those being expelled would be put in jail. We were told to applaud and we did. It's a sad commentary on all of us. But when you've been in the Church for 20 years and believe in it, you don't want to be told you can't do it anymore, that your friends can't speak to you because you've been excommunicated. Well, I finally quit and

told them what they could do with their Church. But at the time, we were all cowed."

Corydon said they were lined up and "mug-shot". Then they had to write up their crimes. "They wanted to know how much money we had been holding back from the Church. That's the biggest crime of all. We had to write down our 'out 2Ds' - that's sex crimes, had we been unfaithful to our wives? That's to give them better control.

"I wrote down whatever I had. Why? I had been withholding stuff. We all had. They kept jacking up the finances, ordering us to charge \$300 an hour for courses, outrageous prices. No one can afford it unless they're totally hooked. So I just wrote down things they already knew.

"Then, before we were allowed to leave, we had to pay \$75 for the seat that we'd sat on for hours. We had paid our fares and for our room. Some of us were told that we had to be security checked. And we had to pay another \$1000 for the privilege."

For most of the mission holders, it was their first glimpse of David Miscavige. Security guards never left his side during the evening. Apart from introducing

each speaker, he had little to say to the audience. He merely warned them what would happen to anyone who turned against Scientology: "That person's future is black. It is so black I can't even describe it right now. I can't even find the words to describe how black that person's future is . . . I mean it is really black."

Within a few days, some of them found out exactly what he meant. Eighteen were taken out to the Scientology prison camp at Happy Valley where they joined David Mayo, who had been there since the summer. They were kept for several months before being released.

"Outrageous and personal abuse permeates the organisation," said Boston lawyer Michael Flynn, who represents 28 people who claim they have been victimised by Scientology. Millions of dollars' worth of lawsuits have been flung back and forth between the Church and ex-Scientologists. Bill Franks, the former Executive Director International of the Church, said that while he was running its international operation it was spending as much as \$1 million a month on lawyers to fight legal battles.

"It's a con - it was all a fraud from the very beginning," claimed Hubbard's former archivist Gerry Armstrong, who said his eyes had been opened after being authorised by Hubbard to write his biography. "I went from being a devotee - I thought it was the hope of mankind - and I learned it was all based on lies and deceptions."

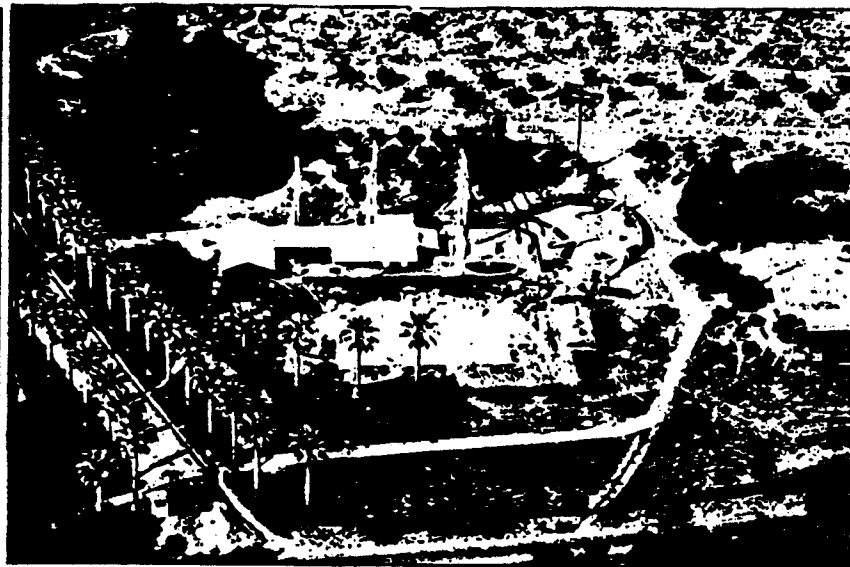
At the end of a six-week trial in Los Angeles Superior Court this summer, Judge Paul G. Breckenridge called the Church of Scientology "schizophrenic and paranoid", adding that "this bizarre combination seems to be a reflection of its founder". Judge Breckenridge ruled that the Church had no right to reclaim documents taken by Gerry Armstrong after he had discovered that Hubbard's claims to have been a war hero, nuclear physicist and world explorer were as fictional as his novels.

But the Church lost more than just the case. For the first time in an American court of law, some of its more outlandish activities were revealed by former Scientologists, and tape recordings were played of senior Church officials openly discussing fraud.

At one of the meetings, a high-ranking legal officer of the Church admitted that yet another body, known as the Religious Research Foundation, which was established four years ago to take over control of Church assets from Hubbard, was no more than a "sham corporation".

Hubbard's top public relations adviser, 34-year-old Laurel Sullivan, was present at that meeting. She had later left the Church and she testified in court that she had been in charge of secret operations to transfer Scientology funds into Hubbard's bank accounts in Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.

Most of this money had been paid to the RRF by Scientologists in England



Hubbard's folly: the clipper at Gillman Hot Springs, near the Mojave Desert

and other parts of the world for courses costing thousands of pounds which they took at the international headquarters in Clearwater. The money then found its way into Hubbard's accounts instead of the Church's. "It was a fraud, a rip-off," said Sullivan, who believes that Church funds totalled between \$200 million and \$300 million in 1981, when she left.

No one knows how much remains in Church coffers, but one former president of the Church believes it has dwindled to little more than \$100 million.

Other Church assets are increasingly being fought over by warring factions. According to senior officers of the Church, in 1982 Hubbard assigned certain key trademarks, including his signature, to the Religious Technology Center, set up by Miscavige and his associates. But the document which is supposed to have passed these valuable rights to the RTC as a gift has been challenged as a forgery. According to two handwriting experts, Hubbard's signature at the end of the document is a clever fake and is certainly not Hubbard's writing. Remarkably, the Notary Public before whom Hubbard should have appeared in person to authenticate his signature turns out to be none other than David Miscavige, co-founder of the RTC.

In the spring of 1982, at the same time as he formed the Church of Spiritual Technology, Miscavige incorporated Author Services International, a profit-making corporation which is used to funnel income to Hubbard from the sale of his books. According to Howard "Homer" Schomer, who was treasurer-secretary of Author Services, during one period \$1 million a week was being moved from Bridge Publications, a Hubbard company in the US, to New Era Publications, another Hubbard firm in Denmark, and then bank-wired to Hubbard accounts in Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Within six months, Schomer testified, Hubbard's wealth grew from \$10 million to \$40 million.

Finally, Schomer said, he could no longer go on skimming money from the Church and make it look legal: "It was fraudulent as far as I was concerned." He

told the Los Angeles court that he was arrested by Church security police and dragged into a tiny room, where he was interrogated for 10 hours by David Miscavige and other Church leaders. "During this time I was bombarded with questions asking who I was working for. Was I working for the CIA? Was I a plant? Was I working for the FBI? Where was all the money I stole?"

Schomer said he was warned that, if he didn't confess: "They were going to make sure that I spent a good deal of time in jail . . . They said: 'Don't worry about the evidence. We will find people who will testify against you.'"

But perhaps the most fascinating testimony at the trial came from a former Scientology intelligence officer who explained how the Church used confidential information from "auditing" files to blackmail members, a practice the Church has often denied.

Edward Walters, who is now manager of a Las Vegas casino, told the court: "If a person is a threat to the organisation and 'suppressive', then we know from L. Ron Hubbard's technology that he is probably connected with the enemy. So the first place we look for crimes is his PC (personal counselling) folder. We do a survey for 'buttons' (sensitive material) to see what the individual is reactive to."

"The individuals, remember, are coming in for counselling and they are usually in emotional turmoil, etcetera . . . if a wife is having marital problems but she's had an affair on the side and she tells her auditors about it, we could put that down, knowing that if she ever went to a lawyer we could call her in - and I have participated personally in this - and tell her: 'Well, now, you don't want to go to a lawyer because if you want to do this, we will be glad to sue and we will be glad to bring your files out and show the public what type of person you are.'"

After listening to Walters and other Scientologists talk of blackmail and intimidation, a visibly angry Judge Breckenridge called such practices both "repugnant and outrageous".

In his decision, the judge wrote of Hubbard: "The evidence portrays a man

who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background and achievements." He was a man gripped by "egoism, greed, avarice, lust for power, and vindictiveness and aggressiveness against persons perceived by him to be disloyal or hostile".

Church lawyers bitterly attacked both Judge Breckenridge's decision and his comments. They have appealed the case and obtained an injunction to keep the documents from being looked at by the press. However, there's no doubt that the adverse publicity from this and other court cases have begun to cripple the Church financially and to discourage potential members.

Hubbard's estranged son Ronald DeWolf believes that his father is now either totally incompetent to handle his affairs or is dead. Last year he petitioned the California courts to be appointed conservator of Hubbard's estate. But the judge dismissed the suit after the Church produced a handwritten letter with Hubbard's fingerprints in which he declared: "I am not a missing person. I am in seclusion of my own choosing."

His son remains unconvinced. "I don't know who they are. But I believe there's a group of people who have him under their control." Alan Walter, who ran a major Scientology mission in the midwest for 20 years until he was excommunicated, was more specific: "Hubbard was set up by these kids. It's a reign of terror."

Heber Jentzsch, a 38-year-old former actor who was elevated by the new leaders to be titular President of Scientology (a public relations post without power in the hierarchy), claims that the allegations against the Church have been made "by people who are criminal - extortionists, perverts, etc". And he attacks the media for being "rapacious" in its coverage of Church affairs. "There are 6½ million people who are living good lives, with a tremendous capability. But I don't find the media wanting to cover any of that."

Church officials also point to the publication in late 1982 of a new Hubbard sci-fi novel, *Battlefield Earth*, a saga of planetary slavery and intergalactic war, as evidence that their leader is alive and in full possession of his faculties. Maryanne Mazzola, a spokeswoman for St Martin's Press, the publishers, said that "stylistically, the book is consistent with everything he's done in the past". And literary agent Forrest Ackerman received a copy with the handwritten inscription, dated November 17, 1982, that read: "To 4E (abbreviation for Forrie), my favourite monster and long time friend. L. Ron Hubbard. Earth, what's left of it—1982." However, David Mayo says he saw a manuscript of the book in 1980 before Hubbard disappeared. As for the signature, he points out that the Church leaders hold the copyright.

Jentzsch claims he received a copy of Hubbard's letter to the judge in the conservatorship case, and he has ➤46

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no doubt that the founder is alive and well. However, Jentzsch refused to be interviewed and his spokeswoman, Kathy Gorgon, said it would be impossible to arrange a visit to Gillman Hot Springs to speak with David Miscavige. "He never talks to the press," she said.

Further doubts about Hubbard are raised by *Ron's Journal 38*, which purports to be a tape recording of his personal message to Scientologists for 1983. Dissidents claim it is a fake, and phonetic analysis of the voice compared with Hubbard's in earlier samples raises the distinct possibility that they were not produced by the same person.

The tape blames all past misdeeds on Mayo and his fellow "squirrels". "Scientology churches are very vast and influential global organisations and there were people around whose claws itched to take them over and in a perverted form exploit them for their own profit," intones the voice. "At last a small hard-core group of founding members - devoted on-policy, in-tech Scientologists - who suddenly understood what was happening, used their powers as trustees and, just as it looked as if the churches were finished and about to fall into hostile hands, they suddenly isolated the infiltrators and threw them out."

The tape goes on to attribute a long list of "major wins" to the activities of the Religious Technology Center, in particular "wins against squirrels: RTC has been the major driving force behind

handling squirrel groups internationally so that Scientologists are protected against those who deal in shoddy substitutes for their own personal gain."

Kathy Gorgon claims that Scientology has attracted 550,000 new members in the past two years. This figure is regarded with scepticism by former executives, who believe the bitter internal battles have caused massive defections. Certainly one of the complaints of the Church leaders at the San Francisco meeting in October 1982 was that the "flow of raw public" had been "inadequate". In his angry letter after being kicked out of the Church, Jay Hurwitz stated: "From July until December 1982 the Scientology international stats (membership figures) C-R-A-S-H-E-D with a capital C." The reason he gave: "The producers are getting knocked out . . . There are many, many more old-timers that have been shot."

Many members have quit to sign up for cheaper Scientology courses with the breakaway groups that have sprung up all over the world. At David Mayo's 8000-member Advanced Ability Center in Santa Barbara, the largest of the spin-off groups, Church-hired private investigators bought out the family living in the penthouse above Mayo's Spanish-style offices and then moved in with listening devices and cameras to photograph all the visitors to the Center. At the same time, the burly private eyes paid visits to banks and stores in Santa Barbara to warn that

Mayo was under "Federal investigation", an untrue but damaging allegation. Presumably, this is the kind of activity *Ron's Journal 38* has in mind when it says hopefully: "The response to RTC's handling of the squirrels has been excellent - the public detest them."

The net of the Church's perceived enemies is closing tighter by the month. In Tampa, a Federal Grand Jury is secretly hearing testimony that Scientologist leaders attempted to entrap local Judge Benjamin Krentzman. He is hearing the case involving former Commodore Messenger Tanya Burden which, according to Diane Voegeding, has caused Hubbard to go into hiding. The Grand Jury was convened to hear testimony from a former high executive of the Church, who recently defected. Allegedly, he has documents that show the involvement of David Miscavige and Ron Hubbard in an effort to entrap Judge Krentzman in a compromising situation.

In September, the Federal tax court in Washington DC issued a 222-page decision stripping the Church of its tax-exempt status. Assessments and penalties from 1970 could cost the Church as much as \$30 million. The Internal Revenue Service in Los Angeles has already attached the Church's property in California, all of which could be seized to pay off tax debts. The court found that the Church of Scientology had a substantial commercial purpose for its operations, that its income benefited

Hubbard, his family and other Church officials, and that the Church "had the illegal purpose of conspiring to impede the IRS from collecting taxes due".

The IRS criminal investigation division is also believed to be investigating Hubbard for possible tax evasion. But the US may have to take its turn in the queue, because Canadian authorities in Toronto are believed to be close to handing down indictments for fraud against Hubbard, his wife Mary Sue, Miscavige, the Broekers and other top officials of the Church. According to a source near to the investigation, the Canadian government will seek Hubbard's extradition. If he then chooses to remain in hiding, he will become a fugitive from justice. FBI agents and US marshals will go out hunting for him and his "wanted" picture will appear on post office walls throughout the country.

If any serious charges stick, the Church's leaders are likely to find that being "Operating Thetans" with the ability to surge to the stars will not save them from a prison sentence in a land-based cell in a penitentiary. Whether that will also apply to Hubbard will depend on how well he has distanced himself legally from his Messengers and whether he is, in fact, alive. According to his son, after being treated for a second pulmonary embolism in 1978, Hubbard gave his personal medical attendant instructions to "bury me in the date fields and don't tell anyone"●