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Sect member 'ordered' to block taxi

From Sun reports

A 69-year-old Texas man trying to leave the Church of Scientology in a taxicab was kept from doing so by sect members until Clearwater police intervened, according to police records.

Sect member William B. Wilson of Midland, Texas, was trying to leave the sect's headquarters at 210 S. Fort Harrison Ave., at 4 p.m. Monday when a

□ Sect foe goes on hunger strike, 2B

car and a pickup truck blocked the cab's path, reports state.

Police said the driver of one of the cars—Henry C. Billings, who gave his home address as that of the sect—said he was told to block Wilson's cab and he "merely followed ... orders" in doing so.

Wilson, who police said was "reluctant" to offer any information about himself, declined to file a complaint and left in the cab.



"I think somebody didn't realize he was leaving. I think he's entitled to his privacy—it came down to a misunderstanding."

—Scientology spokesman Hugh Wilhere

On Tuesday, sect spokesman Hugh Wilhere described the incident as a "misunderstanding," but refused to elaborate.

"I think somebody didn't realize he was leaving,"

Wilhere said of Wilson. "I think he's entitled to his privacy—it came down to a misunderstanding."

The cabbie, Garry Vinyard of Yellow Cab, said, "All I know is that the guy was scared."

Vinyard said that he tried to stick up for his customer and soon found himself confronted with "about five" members of the sect, who wanted Wilson's suitcases from the trunk of the cab.

"I said, 'Sorry buddy, you're not getting anything out of this cab,'" Vinyard said, adding that he then called the police. Vinyard took his fare to Tampa International Airport after the police arrived to investigate the incident.

Wilhere said, "No," when asked whether the incident stemmed from a dispute about a refund or any methods involved in counseling offered by the sect.

The sect spokesman also said that Wilson will be returning to Clearwater.

Wilson could not be reached for comment. A woman who answered the telephone at Wilson's Texas residence said he was en route to Midland.