

Salvos open Scientology trial

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LOS ANGELES — Stacks of papers show reclusive Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard packed lie after lie into his books, a lawyer claimed in court Thursday.

Boston attorney Michael Flynn is representing the man who acquired the papers before they were sealed by the court.

Flynn told Superior Court Judge Paul G. Breckenridge defendant Gerald Armstrong received the papers legally from a British writer who was preparing a biography on Hubbard.

The plaintiffs, the church and Hubbard's wife, Mary Sue, contend Armstrong, a former church archivist, stole the five boxes of personal papers written over the years by Hubbard.

Church attorneys claim the papers belong to the church, not Hubbard, and include Hubbard's unpublished book "Excalibur."

Flynn said Armstrong gave him the papers in 1982 because of the alleged lies he uncovered.

Flynn alleges Hubbard never received college bachelors and doctorate degrees; is not a nuclear scientist; and was not crippled and blinded in war, then healed through the philosophy of "Dianetics," the book that launched the church in 1950.

Armstrong received the papers legally, said Flynn, who argued Hubbard and his wife are public

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—Barry Litt

figures and the public has a right to know "what this man has done" in defrauding them of millions of dollars.

The attorney said he planned to call a "surprise witness," a church official who may testify he has seen Hubbard in the past few months and knows of Hubbard's whereabouts. Flynn declined to identify the witness.

Hubbard has not been seen publicly since March 1980.

Mrs. Hubbard's attorney, Barry Litt, told the judge, "These materials were completely private and were to be returned after the biography was completed and Mr. Armstrong has no right to them."

Armstrong violated a trust by taking the papers from writer Omar Garrison, who later was paid a fee by a church-publishing company when the biography project was halted, he claimed.

Litt accused Armstrong and

Flynn of planning to use the papers in other lawsuits against the church in a "scheme to obtain millions of dollars in damage claims."

Flynn, who has filed a harassment suit against the church, also represents about 20 other people in suits against Scientology.

After Armstrong left the church in 1981, he met with Garrison in either Costa Mesa or Utah and improperly took five boxes of papers, Litt contended. He said many of the papers are original and in Hubbard's own handwriting — worth substantial amounts of money to collectors.

The suit, filed in August 1982, seeks the return of the papers, a court order requiring Armstrong to keep the contents secret and damages.

Litt claimed the church paid private investigators thousands of dollars to track down the papers.

Another member of Armstrong's defense team, attorney Julia Dragojevic, said Armstrong was a church member for 11 years and was assigned by Hubbard to help Garrison with the biography. She said the church is interfering with Armstrong's contract with Hubbard.

Litt said the papers substantiate church claims about Hubbard's achievements. He said Mrs. Hubbard wants them returned "not because they show anything wrong" but because they are private.

The plaintiffs presented a letter purportedly written by Hubbard, which says he "entrusted" his personal papers and diaries to the church because he could not carry them with him in his travels.

The letter, which attorneys say will be authenticated by expert witnesses, supports the church's claim to the documents.

In a Riverside Superior Court case last year, Hubbard's estranged son contended his father was dead, missing or incompetent to handle his own affairs. Ronald DeWolf, 49, of Nevada, also claimed church officials had been plundering church assets because Hubbard was dead, missing or mentally incompetent.

The probate case was dismissed by a Riverside judge after the church presented a letter, purportedly written by Hubbard, saying he was in seclusion by choice.