

# L. Ron Hubbard, mysterious recluse

Scientology founder hasn't been seen in public since 1976

**S**cientology founder L. Ron Hubbard has replaced the late Howard Hughes as the man of mystery.

Hubbard, 73, was last viewed in public in 1976. And he was last seen by any close associate willing to talk about him in March 1980.

So where is he?

"Somewhere around here," said Bent Corydon, pointing to the bleak desert of Riverside County around the church's compound at Gilman Hot Springs. "He's never more than 40 minutes away from here."

Corydon's Riverside mission, 20 miles west of Gilman Hot Springs, was one of the first big ones to split from the church. Because of his proximity to the Scientology compound, Corydon keeps a close eye on these grounds.

Church spokeswoman Kathy Gorgon said she does not know where Hubbard lives.

Hubbard is the author of more than 241 books — including the recently published "Battlefield Earth," which for a time was on the best seller list. In a 1983 court case, Hubbard filed a declaration with his fingerprints on it rather than appear in court, saying he fears for his own safety and is too busy writing to appear in public.



A portrait of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard taken several years ago stares through a window of the church's Los Angeles headquarters.

Hubbard may have lived at Gilman Hot Springs for a few days in February, said Corydon.

"That building was wrapped in plastic," he said, pointing to a structure near a half-million dollar clipper ship "docked" in the desert. Hubbard hates dust, said Corydon. "There were a half-dozen kids outside spraying something at the base of it."

After a few days, the plastic was taken down. Corydon said Hubbard may have lived in the sealed structure while the church readied new quarters for him nearby. On the other hand, "it could have

been a smoke screen," he said, to make the public think he was staying there.

The first time Corydon met Hubbard was on his ship, Apollo, in 1975. He described Hubbard as a frightened man who didn't want to meet the crew and who was bedridden most of the time.

Hubbard had a heart attack on the ship that year, and Corydon said he has heard reports from Gilman Hot Springs that Hubbard suffered another heart attack last December.

Hubbard's son, Ronald DeWolf, claimed Hubbard was either dead or incompetent

and filed suit in Riverside County Superior Court. The judge in the case didn't agree and ruled in 1983 that Hubbard had a right to privacy and did not have to appear in court to prove he was alive.

DeWolf claimed in court that his father lied about his biography — that Hubbard, for instance, was not "twice pronounced dead" from war injuries that were cured by Scientology.

Hubbard, in a affidavit, told the court he was afraid to appear in public because his life had been threatened. Fingerprint and handwriting experts said the document was valid.

"I am in seclusion of my own choosing," Hubbard said in the statement. "As Thoreau secluded himself by Walden Pond, so I have chosen to do so in my own fashion. Of course, I am older now than I used to be. In my case, I am fortunate to be in good health and thus able to maintain my heavy daily work schedule. As to the claim of my incompetence, I do not intend to dignify it with a response."

Church spokeswoman Gorgon said the DeWolf court case proved Hubbard was alive and well.

A far different picture emerges from an affidavit filed in a 1977 Boston court case by former servant Anne Rosenblum, who said Hubbard "had long reddish-grayish hair down past his shoulders, rotting teeth, a really fat gut . . . he didn't look anything like his pictures."

"He was a fanatic about dust and laundry. Even after his office had just been dusted . . . he would come in screaming about the dust and how 'you are all trying to kill me!' " she said.