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Trial reveals Scientology's darker side

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LOS ANGELES—It's 1984, and Big Brother—under the guise of L. Ron Hubbard—is being slowly exposed.

Now 34 years after Hubbard created the Church of Scientology, the documents he wrote, the laws he created, the orders he issued, and the people who lied and cheated to protect him are surfacing in a court of law.

Analysis

They all offer evidence of a chilling tale.

Since the sect orchestrated its surreptitious "take-over" of Clearwater in 1975, newspapers and the federal government have revealed much of what transpired. But a Scientologist instrumental in the operation has fled the sect and reveals what was actually happening behind the scenes; how the people of Clearwater were viewed by Scientologists and what was going on inside the mind of Lafayette Ronald Hubbard.

This is a glimpse of the dark side of the moon.

Gerald Armstrong was a Scientologist for 11 years. During that time he rose and fell from positions of "ultimate" importance within the organization—depending on the whims of Hubbard.

"He's a 73-year-old spoiled brat ... a crier and a moaner," said the mustachioed Armstrong, sipping a martini at a downtown Los Angeles hotel after the weekend recess of his Superior Court trial.

Armstrong is accused of taking 10,000 Scientology-related documents when he fled the sect in late 1981; documents he believes expose Hubbard as a

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* Sect

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fraud but which are sealed from public scrutiny by the court.

Armstrong's attorney, Michael Flynn, says he plans to introduce many of those documents as evidence. If and when that occurs, the documents then enter the public domain, open for scrutiny.

From 1969 to 1972, Armstrong served aboard Hubbards's flagship, the Apollo, and in time was brought into the inner circle of the prolific science-fiction writer.

By the time Hubbard and the Church of Scientology began their move into Clearwater in November 1975, Armstrong was working in the Intelligence Bureau of the sect's Guardian Office. Indeed, it was he who was sent to the King Arthur's Court condominiums in Dunedin to prepare Hubbard's personal office.

Documents already made public reveal, and Armstrong corroborates, that the Church of Scientology came to Clearwater acting as the United Churches of Florida with a plan to establish its international headquarters in the old Fort Harrison Hotel and to take control of the city.

Ironically, Armstrong says, Clearwater was not the only city targeted to become the sect's home base.

"It could have been Charleston, S.C.," or any other of a number of suitable cities in the southeastern United States, Armstrong said. But several circumstances ultimately led to Clearwater.

"We were looking for a city close to a major airport with buildings the size to accommodate several hundred people ... and in a warm area that would be pleasant for those brought in to take (Scientology) courses," Armstrong recalled.

Dates, names, places and events spill non-stop from the 37-year-old man's memory. Armstrong was described in court this week as a man with "astonishing recall."

Once the decision was made to move to Clearwater, certain people and organizations including the *Clearwater Sun* and *St. Petersburg Times* newspapers, then-Mayor Gabriel Cazares and others were viewed by the sect as enemies.

"Everyone in Clearwater was treated with suspicion, and certain names were targeted (for handling)," Armstrong said. "(The sect) viewed a few people as the ones who were stirring the whole thing up: (Times reporter) Betty Orsini, the mayor and (Mark) Sableman," a *Sun* reporter who wrote about



'L. Ron Hubbard (right) thought all Wogs (a derogatory term for non-Scientologists) would believe his stories and lies. But Wogs are not stupid.'

—Gerald Armstrong (left)



Scientology. "See, the Scientologists were so sensitive that they treated *anystory* as *entheta* (unfavorable publicity) and their way to handle that was to attack."

"My opinion of the way it went was Scientology and Hubbard waltzed into town as UCF (United Churches of Florida)," Armstrong recalled. "But when the local people learned the truth (on Jan. 23, 1976) and asked, 'Why the deception. ... Why did you do that?' instead of getting an explanation, they got attacked."

Within the church such attacks are dictated under the "Fair Game Policy."

In retrospect, Armstrong said, he sees there was no way the sect could have maintained its cover as UCF for any length of time.

"Hubbard thought all Wogs (a derogatory term for non-Scientologists) would believe his stories and lies. But Wogs are not stupid," Armstrong now realizes.

He said that when reporters yanked from the sect its shroud of secrecy, "Hubbard issued an order saying: 'The local people had better get used to us. We're here to stay.'" The sect's Guardian Office also issued an order admonishing Scientologists not to buy or read local newspapers.

"We operated virtually without problems for about two months," Armstrong continued. "But there were some troubles. ... In fact, Hubbard brought the Guardian Office to Dunedin for a briefing. He was very upset with the GO because he felt he had single-handedly handled the move (to Clearwater)."

"But that was Hubbard—he had a slightly overblown ego."

Armstrong said Scientologists viewed Clearwater residents "as inferior."

"We had a *right* to lie to them, to cheat them. The reason for that was that we were working for LRH and saving the planet."

Armstrong said Scientologists believed that, "If the Wogs were as aware as we were, they would be in Scientology."

Covert operations were authorized—frame the mayor, discredit reporters, gather damning evidence on anyone who speaks out against the church, Hubbard ordered.

Many sect projects backfired. The public was appalled when Scientologists dressed as Nazis marched on the *Sun*.

Although Armstrong left Dunedin in May 1976 for a "post" in California, he later returned to the Fort Harrison Hotel, where he was banished to the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF) and spent the next 17 months living in a storage room and working more than 100 hours a week. In time, hundreds of other Scientologists joined him in RPF, a form of punishment the sect embraces to this day.

The former Scientology archivist—who in addition to living with Hubbard collected hundreds of thousands of papers, documents and pictures about the man's life—says Hubbard's public image is fraudulent. Armstrong says the documents under court seal prove Hubbard lied when he claimed he cured blindness and that he was a war hero and a nuclear physicist.

The Scientology Creed, written by Hubbard, states, "We of the Church believe: That all men of whatever race, color or creed were created with equal rights."

Still, when one of Hubbard's wives complained of

having to get on her knees to clean the floor, Armstrong says Hubbard replied, "Get yourself a nigger—that's what they're made for."

Does that mean Hubbard is prejudiced?

"Very much so," Armstrong said, adding he believes there are few blacks in the six million-member organization because "they simply won't put up with being enslaved one more time."

"What I term the ultimate paradoxical documents from the archives of LRH, a document called 'Admissions,' he writes in his own hand, 'All men are my slaves.'

"I believe when all Scientologists confront the fact that they are his slaves, they will be free."

Gerald Armstrong is now free.

"Previously I felt, though I knew the organization engaged in lies and fraud, they were excused in my mind because they were done to counter the attack of the enemy," Armstrong testified softly in court.

"It was very clear in my mind in the first eight to nine years, there was an enemy out to destroy mankind, out to destroy civilization, out to get Mr. Hubbard and destroy his reputation.

"After 1981, I began to see the destruction of anyone didn't resolve any problems. In fact, there was no enemy. In fact, all the lies Mr. Hubbard and the organization had been engaged in were simply to give him wealth and power, and I wanted no part of that."

Although Armstrong is the man who brought the documents to court in an attempt to make them public, he is by no means alone in making claims against Hubbard and the Church of Scientology.

Hundreds of followers have left the sect in recent years, forming their own splinter groups and still adhering to Dianetics, a so-called science of the mind created by Hubbard.

From throughout the West Coast, former Scientologists have made a pilgrimage to Los Angeles to view the proceedings, lend their support and tell their stories about Scientology to those who will listen.

Nearly as many active Scientologists attend the trial daily.

Armstrong is expected to continue his testimony Monday before Superior Court Judge Paul G. Breckenridge. Attorney Flynn said a number of other former ranking Scientologists, including the man who was Head of the Church World Wide, also will testify.