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Laurel Sullivan, former publicist for Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, stands outside LA Superior Court where she testified that she had become "a target" of hostility by church members.

Ex-publicist says she was 'target' of Scientologists

Former assistant to L. Ron Hubbard testifies in suit to recover documents

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A former publicist for Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard testified Friday that she left the church in November 1981 because she had become "a target" of hostility by church members.

Ex-publicist Laurel Sullivan, 34, was cross-examined by church attorney Robert Harris in a lawsuit brought by the church and Mary Sue Hubbard, the founder's wife, seeking to recover allegedly stolen documents from former church archivist Gerald Armstrong.

Sullivan said that after she was "busted" from her job as Hubbard's publicist, she got a job in the church archives, where Armstrong was gathering material for a Hubbard biography. As the project continued, she said, she began to fear that some people would see the biography as a downgrading of Hubbard's image and that she would then become "a target."

Harris, asking her to explain, showed her a Scientology document entitled "Penalties for Lower Conditions," from which she read excerpts in court. She said when someone becomes "a target" — which she said was one of the "lower conditions" — they may be "tricked" or "lied to" or sued by any Scientologist.

"I felt that revealing all the details of his life was not necessary," she said of the biography, that some revelations "would make him (Hubbard) look less like a god and more like a man, like everyone else."

But she said no one on the biography project meant to denigrate Hubbard, and "nobody has it in mind now."

Seeing herself as a "target," she said, she told Armstrong of her plans to leave the church.

She said she also encouraged Armstrong to leave the church.

"I said, 'How about you guys? Are you going?'" she said. "Jerry said, 'I can't.' He said he had an obligation to Omar (Garrison, author of the proposed biography), to the project."

However, Harris read from a deposition she had given earlier, indicating Armstrong had told her he would leave the church.

"He didn't say when," she testified Friday.

Scientologists contend Armstrong had already decided to leave the church when he amassed documents on Hubbard. But Armstrong said the five boxes of papers being sought were gathered with Hubbard's permission and that he kept them after he left only to prove he was innocent of church allegations that he made false statements to discredit Hubbard.

On Thursday, Sullivan said Hubbard had ordered shredding of some documents that indicated Hubbard maintained some control of church operations. The shredding was ordered at a time when church officials feared a raid by federal agents, she said.