

Clearwater Sun

24 JUNE 1984

Editorials of the Sun

Decision is a major win for anti-Scientologists

We told you that's the first reaction any longstanding anti-Scientologist will probably have when reading the brilliant and thundering decision announced Thursday by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Paul G. Breckenridge.

In terms that will surely widen the existing cracks in Scientology's foundations, Judge Breckenridge said, "The organization (Scientology) clearly is schizophrenic and paranoid, and this bizarre combination seems to be a reflection of its founder"

Breckenridge ruled that a former sect archivist, Gerald Armstrong, was justified in taking thousands of Scientology documents when he fled from the sect in 1982.

The court ruling will give encouragement to other disenchanted Scientology members who want to escape from their masters but who are afraid to.

Armstrong was afraid that, if he left the sect, Hubbard and his underlings would kill him. To reduce the chances of that, Armstrong reached into the files and removed tape recordings, letters and official orders. Then he made his escape.

In effect, by taking the secret, "inside" materials, Armstrong did exactly what Scientology has done to its new enrollees for years. New members are required to reveal the most intimate and potentially embarrassing facts about themselves; Scientology then uses these confessions as a form of blackmail against any members who might rebel against the sect.

Another important part of the Breckenridge decision is his statement that founder L. Ron Hubbard is "the alter ego" of Scientology and that Hubbard controls the sect through subsidiary "orgs" or organizations.

The implication of that ruling could be that Hubbard, who has contended that he no longer has any say-so about Scientology's operations, may be found subject to subpoenas and other court actions in the years ahead. His self-imposed exile may be coming to an end.

Scientologists like to speak about their "wins." Barring unfavorable actions by an appeals courts, Judge Breckenridge's ruling constitutes a major win for Armstrong, for Clearwater, for anti-Scientologists everywhere, but most of all for truth and justice.