

Founder of Scientology faces default judgment

By FRED LEEBON
of The Oregonian staff

A Multnomah County judge entered a default judgment Tuesday against L. Ron Hubbard, the controversial founder of the Church of Scientology, as a long-running civil fraud trial against Hubbard and the church reached the halfway mark.

Circuit Judge Donald H. Londer signed the default against the reclusive Hubbard at the conclusion of the plaintiff's case in the eighth week of trial.

Hubbard, who has not been seen publicly since 1980, did not appear for the trial. Londer's ruling means Hubbard by law is liable for damages to the plaintiff, Julie Christofferson Titchbourne. The judge said he would leave it to the jury to determine the amount of damages, if any, to be imposed against Hubbard.

Londer also pared a few allegations from Titchbourne's long complaint on the grounds her attorneys had not offered sufficient evidence to present them to the jury. Two of the allegations concerned Hubbard's personal health and treatment at a psychiatric hospital in the 1940s.

Titchbourne's attorney, Garry P. McMurry, said evidence could not be presented on those points because Londer reviewed the medical records in private and ruled they would not be admissible.

Laurel J. Sullivan, a former personal secretary to Hubbard, finished testifying Tuesday as the ninth witness and sixth former Scientologist to appear on Titchbourne's behalf.

Much of Sullivan's final day of cross-examination was spent discussing several alleged misrepresentations printed by Hubbard and the church about his personal, educational and professional background. Defense attorneys offered evidence that Hubbard

made attempts in 1974 and 1977 to correct inaccuracies in biographical statements.

Titchbourne testified earlier that she relied on several of the representations in deciding to become involved with Scientology in 1975 and 1976.

An "authorized" biography approved by Hubbard in 1977 and submitted by the defense said Hubbard was enrolled in "one of the first nuclear physics courses ever taught in an American university," which differed from earlier printed statements declaring that Hubbard was a nuclear physicist.

Despite the 1977 modification, Sullivan said she approved the description of Hubbard as a "nuclear physicist" in a book jacket reissued in 1981.

She wrote in another document that she had "trepidations" about making the change because it would indicate there was something wrong with the earlier statement.

She also testified that she believed Hubbard himself had written the earlier description. "I would say that anything L.R.H. wrote about himself was authorized," she said.

Sullivan also was questioned about Hubbard's involvement with horses as a boy in Montana, and whether he rode broncos or "broke" broncos at that age. In a handwritten letter in 1974, Hubbard wrote that he started riding broncos at age 3½ and that at age 28 he "broke" a rodeo horse no other rider could handle.

During her tenure working for Hubbard, Sullivan said she saw Hubbard around horses on two occasions and that horses "scared him to death." Once was at a parade in Spain and the other was a horse in Trinidad being used for photographs recreating portions of Hubbard's life.

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Default declared at Scientology trial

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