

# Clearwater Sun

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## Woman awarded \$39 million in Scientology trial

By ROCH THORNTON  
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PORTLAND, Ore.—A jury Friday awarded \$39 million to a woman who says the Church of Scientology defrauded her with claims it would improve her eyesight and make her more intelligent.

The Multnomah Circuit Court jury, after a 10-week trial and 2½ days of deliberations, found the church defrauded Julie Christofferson Titchbourne, a church member for nine months, in 1975 and 1976.

"This is a ridiculous decision. The Constitution is in serious trouble in

the state of Oregon and we will appeal," said Earle C. Cooley, a Boston attorney representing the church.

Ms. Titchbourne's lawyer, Garry P. McMurry of Portland, said the award "will stand and will be heard around the world." He called the amount "adequate for the punishment that was intended."

"This is great," said Ms. Titchbourne, 27, after the jury announced its decision. She embraced her husband, Bob Titchbourne, and other relatives in the courtroom.

Ms. Titchbourne, of Portland, sought the return of \$3,253 she paid to

the church for books and classes, plus up to \$42 million in punitive damages.

The jury awarded her \$1.5 million from the Church of Scientology Davis Mission, a Portland branch; \$17.5 million from the Church of Scientology of California; and \$20 million from church founder L. Ron Hubbard.

Circuit Judge Donald H. Londer entered a default judgment against Hubbard, a recluse, on April 30 because he failed to respond to the suit.

Heber Jentsch, president of the Church of Scientology International, said the lawsuit was part of a conspiracy against the church and said the

church will appeal.

"Evidence in this suit shows plaintiff witnesses acted as agents in a far-ranging conspiracy among government and private vested interests including the IRS and psychiatric front groups," Jentsch said.

McMurry told the jury his client became interested in Scientology when she was 17 years old.

He said she read in church literature and was told by church leaders that Scientology could improve her weak eyesight, raise her I.Q. and teach her more about the mind than any psychologist or psychiatrist.

McMurry also claimed Hubbard has retained control over the church and made millions of dollars from it, despite the founder's claims that he retired from church management in 1966 and has modest earnings.

Cooley told the panel Ms. Titchbourne's suit is the "broadest-based attack on religion that has ever happened in the history of man."

The church lawyer said Scientology is among the most abused religions in history, and "perhaps only Jews have suffered more at the hands of their enemies."