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Scientists settle 4 lawsuits out of court

From Sun reports

TAMPA — The Church of Scientology has reached out-of-court settlements in four multimillion-dollar lawsuits but U.S. District Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich has sealed the records in all cases.

The settlements were reached in cases involving former Clearwater Mayor Gabe Cazares and his wife Maggie; Tanja C. Burden of Las Vegas; former Scientologists Nancy and John McLean of Ontario, Canada; and former Scientologist Margery Wakefield, whose address was unavailable.

Tampa attorney Walt Logan, who represented the plaintiffs in all four

cases, said the files were sealed "over our objections."

The Cazareses sued the church for \$1.5 million, alleging that the Scientologists invaded their privacy and maliciously prosecuted them with a frivolous lawsuit.

The Scientologists sued Cazares, who was mayor when the church set up an international headquarters in Clearwater in 1975, for slander after he opposed the sect's presence in the city. That suit was dismissed in U.S. District Court as frivolous.

"We can't talk about the terms of the settlement," said Cazares, a candi-

Bay area

date for Congress. "But I make no secret about the fact that Maggie and I are not unhappy about the settlement. In fact, we're smiling."

Ms. Burden's lawsuit, filed in 1980, sought \$45 million from the church. She charged that the founder, the late L. Ron Hubbard, his wife Mary Sue and the church's Clearwater headquarters, enslaved her for more than four years.

Ms. Burden joined the church in

1973, when she was 13. Her lawsuit said the church promised to free her of mental and emotional problems and enhance her intelligence.

A federal jury, in a non-binding trial in March, recommended she receive a \$325,000 award.

"Ms. Burden is satisfied with the settlement. I wish I could tell you more," said Michael Tabb, a Boston attorney who represented Ms. Burden with Logan.

The McLeans sued the church in 1981 for \$6 million for invasion of privacy and malicious prosecution. A federal jury in Tampa recommended a

\$775,000 award in a non-binding trial in March.

Ms. Wakefield contended that the church fraudulently promised to cure her mental illness and instead mentally abused her. The amount of damages she requested was not available.

Paul Johnson, an attorney for the church, said in a prepared statement that the lawsuits "have been amicably settled."

The controversial sect, which claims 6 million members worldwide, contends that its teachings, based on works by science-fiction writer Hubbard, allow members to achieve inner peace and understanding.