

prevented her from getting mental care

“I'm not permitted to discuss these irresponsible statements she's been making to the news media, much as I would like to.”

— Paul Johnson,
the church's Tampa lawyer

Wakefield now repudiates the agreement, claiming she was pressured into signing it, and aggressively seeks forums — in the press, on radio shows, in churches — to denounce Scientology.

“I don't care what the legal repercussions are at this point,” she told the Tribune recently. “I want people in this area to know what Scientology is about. I want them to know it's a satanic cult.”

The church has been the center of controversy since it was founded by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in 1954.

Hubbard taught that Scientolo-

gists can remove sensory traces of painful events in their pasts through use of a lie detector-like device called an E-meter and a counseling technique called auditing. Scientologists also believe in a form of reincarnation in which souls, which they call “thetans,” are “implanted” into new babies.

Wakefield got involved with Scientology in 1968, when she was a 19-year-old music student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Just emerging from six months in a mental hospital, she was troubled and looking for answers.

Wakefield contends another music student literally hypnotized her into the church by repeating information about Scientology.

“She looked directly into my eyes, and she kept repeating the same thing,” Wakefield says.

Wakefield spent the next 12 years in the church, in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Clearwater and elsewhere. Much of the time, she either worked for the church or in

various computer jobs. She estimates she spent about \$50,000 on church courses.

Among her allegations about Scientology:

■ The beliefs and auditing techniques taught at the secret upper levels of Scientology are evidence that the church is actually a cult. “They're based on science fiction, and they're based on black magic,” she says.

Wakefield says she is now a Christian who attends an Episcopal church.

■ The Scientology church routinely asked members in disfavor to commit crimes to further its goals. Wakefield says she stole documents from the American Psychiatric Association in Washington, D.C., in 1972 on orders from the church.

■ When she reached the higher levels of the church's teachings in 1980, she had a mental breakdown, Wakefield says. During this time, the church kept her in a locked room in its Fort Harrison Hotel in Clearwater for “a couple of weeks,”

and guarded her 24 hours a day. The church subsequently expelled her.

■ In 1981, after she had been expelled and had returned to her family in Madison, Wis., three Scientologists took her to a motel, held her there three days, and forced her to sign an agreement promising not to sue the church in return for a check for \$16,000. She signed, and accepted the money, which she used to repay a loan from her father.

■ When she returned to the Tampa Bay area and sued the church, someone broke into her home in mid-1986 and sprayed what appeared to be blood on her bedroom wall. She blames unknown Scientologists.

Wakefield reported the incident to police, who photographed the bedroom but made no arrests.

Church officials said they could not respond to Wakefield's allegations because they're bound by the settlement and the sealed court files.