

Members praise church 'technology'

Alan Kellman and Curt Larson share a long and unabashed commitment to the Church of Scientology — a loyalty that is rare in the peripatetic "network of seekers," according to one scholar.

Gary Shepherd, an Oakland University sociology professor, says membership is often transient in groups like the Church of Scientology "because people become disillusioned with the unreality, the commitment becomes too great or their therapeutic needs have been met and they no longer require the help of Scientology or Dianetics."

Even more unusual about Kellman and Larson — one a lawyer, the other an engineer — is that they defy popular assumptions about the nature of people who belong to non-mainstream groups like the Church of Scientology.

Kellman is a 44-year-old attorney who leads a simple life in the country with his Scientologist wife, Ursula. His faith in the church is unshakable.

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When he joined the church in the mid-'70s when its offices were located in Detroit, Kellman says he felt "as if there was something to learn about why people are the way they

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are. I wanted to understand the spiritual end of things . . . I meditated a while, but it didn't get me anywhere."

His marriage to a Scientologist at the time, he says, "exposed him to the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard."

Kellman, who was raised in a Jewish home but rarely practiced Judaism, later married another Scientologist in a ceremony performed by an ordained minister of the church.

"My family has been mostly supportive of my affiliation with the church. They feel that if this is something that's beneficial, that's fine."

Kellman's participation in the church consists of taking "life improvement" classes, reading books, auditing — he "gives and receives spiritual guidance"

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Six-month project

Julie Edgar, 28, has worked for *The Daily Tribune* since 1987.

Edgar, a Farmington native and graduate of the University of Michigan, wrote this report following six months of research and interviews.



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— and training to become an auditor.

He doesn't regularly attend Sunday services because "I need at least one day out of the week to enjoy the country."

For Kellman, the principles of Scientology are more intuitive now. He says he applies them in his everyday life, both professional and private.

"There was a particular course I took that had to do with examining social and anti-social characteristics in people. By observing people you can know who and what you're dealing with," he explains.

Kellman cites people "who change or alter news" and those who "go out of their way to pass along bad news" as exhibiting the characteristics "set forth" by L. Ron Hubbard.

While he hasn't taken a course in marriage — one of the most popular in the church — Kellman says when he and Ursula disagree about something, they sit down and talk, using some of the ideas they've learned at the church.

"If you have a lot of ARC (Affinity, Reality, Communication) with somebody and share the same kind of views of the world, you're going to feel a lot closer to them."

A basic and important concept to Scientologists, ARC is defined in the 1978 book *What is Scientology?* as "good feeling, love or friendliness."

Curt Larson, a 33-year-old auto-

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motive engineer who works in Warren, says he too uses the "technology" he has learned in the church in both his job and his private life.

Since taking an administrative class at the church, Larson says he accomplishes more during the workday and generally has "better results in business, not just making more money."

He says he is better organized, and finds that additional work is not burdensome.

"I used to work as hard as I could. I learned how to work smarter and not just harder. I take a task through completion instead of starting one thing and dropping it . . . Based on the responsibilities I've been given, my bosses have

noticed it."

When he joined the church 12 years ago, Larson was collecting unemployment and "looking for answers to the problems of life."

He picked up a copy of L. Ron Hubbard's seminal 1950 text, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, and it led him to the church.

Church teachings also helped him take control of his personal life, Larson says.

"I'm more careful and honest when I enter into a relationship. I ask myself, am I really willing to make a commitment to this person from the start and not just have a little fling or something? Is it workable from both sides?"

"I try to find out the reason be-

hind the upset. If there's an upset, there's a misunderstanding somewhere. I try to calmly work out the situation through discussion," Larson says.

Larson has completed the *New Era Dianetics Course*, a professional auditor training course which enables him to "audit a person and handle their Reactive Mind directly."

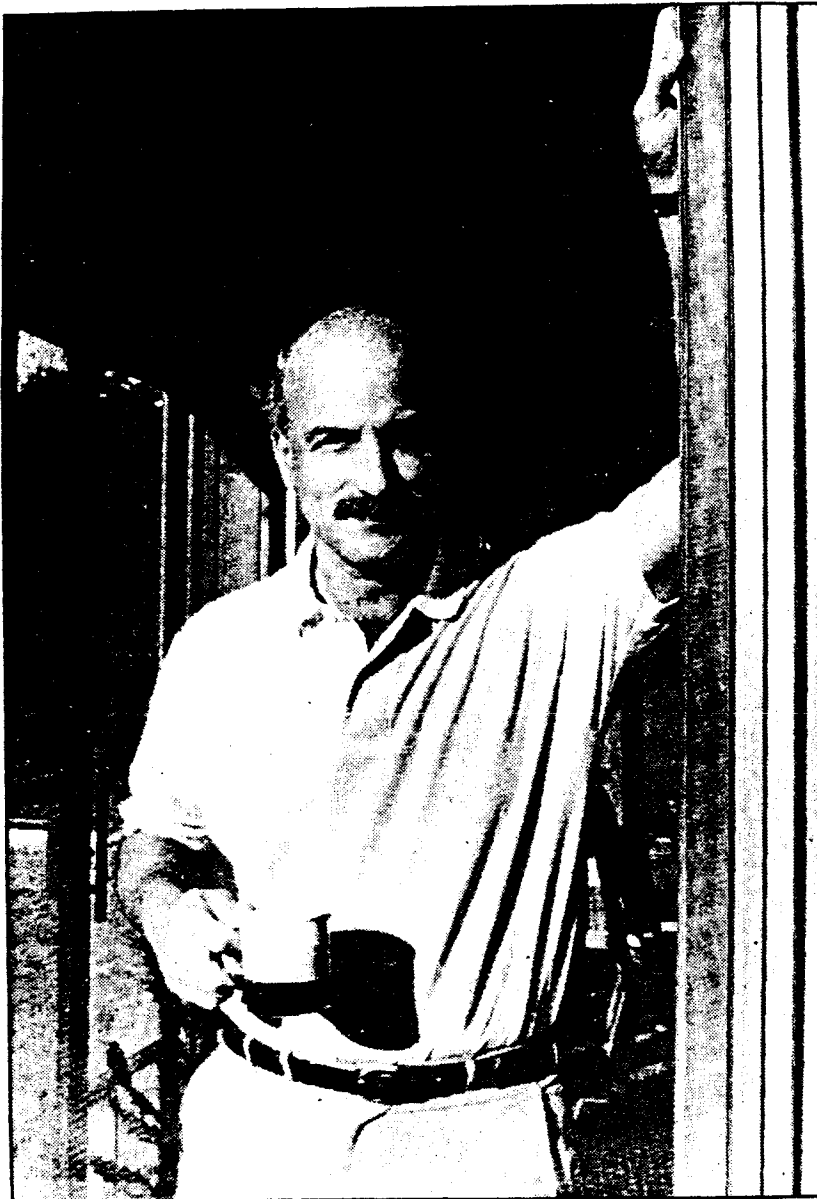
The *Reactive Mind*, a central Dianetics concept, is defined by Hubbard as the "vicious" part of the mind that works on a stimulus-response basis, exerting control over a person's "awareness, purposes, thoughts, body and actions."

Neither Larson nor Kellman seem fazed by attacks on the church, especially those that focus on Hubbard, the spiritual founder of the church whose writings form the basis of all church teaching.

"I don't consider him to be a god, but I don't know of anybody better," Kellman asserts. "I don't make much of negative accounts of Hubbard . . . Some of the stuff I've read is so much in contradiction to what he believes and teaches that it's absurd."

Larson calls Hubbard "one hell of a guy."

"I don't pay much attention to attacks on the church," he says. "I kind of wish people — not just the media — would get their facts straight . . . If somebody told me that Michigan is a terrible place to live, I wouldn't listen to them because I like Michigan."



For attorney Alan Kellman, 44, the professional and personal benefits of the Church of Scientology are undeniable.