Confront Controversy, Gain Converts, And Make Money

By Stephen Koff
St. Petersburg Times

CLEARWATER, FLA.—After years of speaking with the townfolk and veiling itself in secrecy, the Church of Scientology has succeeded in turning Clearwater into its spiritual mecca. Scientologists quietly run teen nightclubs, schools, day-care centers, management consulting firms and other businesses, records and interviews show.

Now the strategy of the organization, longtime observers say, is to confront controversy, gain converts and make money—lots of it. Scientology's Clearwater operation brings in $1.2 million to $2 million a week, say church watchers who include Clearwater police, former Scientology security chief Richard Azneran and former Scientologists-turned-author Ben Corry.

Fee schedules show how the dollars add up: 12 1/2 hours of basic Scientology counseling in Clearwater costs $8,000, not counting meals and accommodations.

Scientology brochures boast that Clearwater has the “largest community of Scientologists in the world,” with more than 1,000 Scientologists served by “several hundred” staff members.

Authorities cannot confirm those numbers, but the claim itself is a dramatic increase from the secretive Scientology of 1975, when the organization used an assumed name—United Churches of Florida, Inc.—to buy the Fort Harrison Hotel for $2.3 million in cash. Armed guards ringed the downtown hotel, and for weeks the church would not reveal its true identity.

The stealthy move was followed by deep suspicion between the Scientologists and community leaders. Church documents seized by the FBI later would show that Scientologists tried to frame then-Mayor Gabe Cazares with a hit-and-run accident, and Bette O'Reilly, a St. Petersburg Times investigative reporter, was targeted as a Scientology “enemy” and harassed.

But some things have changed in 13 years—among them the way Scientology presents itself.

“IT'S obvious that there’s some effort to be less visible, in terms of either making attacks on people or in terms of making more of a splash around town,” said Jim Sheeler, Clearwater’s community development manager.

They want to be part of the community,” said C. David Carley, Jr., chairman of the Citizens Bank of Clearwater, "And you cannot blame them for that.”

Scientology officials, most notably spokesperson Richard Haworth, are frequent guests on local radio shows and a prime-time staple on Vision Cable's community access channel. “They have a public relations campaign to present themselves as the person you work with, your friend, or the person next door,” said Randy Kabrich, programming director for Q105-FM, a station on which Haworth has denounced Scientology's detractors. "And I am not aware of any other religious group, cult or non-cult, that has gone to that extent.”

Scientology officials and their lawyers would not comment for this series of articles. Asked again for comment (after last week's story first appeared) chief Scientology counsel Earle C. Cookley of Boston said, "The article that appeared... is the most vicious and malicious perversion of the truth that I have seen in 32 years.”

Supported by sponsors
Sometimes, it's hard to tell when the Scientologists are involved in an event or promotion. Some visitors say they were invited to Clearwater by innocuous-sounding groups that turned out to be promoting Scientology principles or programs.

For instance, leaders of American Indian tribes were brought to the Fort Harrison in February (1988) by the Concerned Businessmen's Association of America. Their invitations mentioned programs for drug and alcohol abuse prevention, but said nothing about Scientology, according to Indians who received them.

The Concerned Businessmen's Association, based in Glendale, Calif., is a group of Scientologists.

"I thought it was going to be a group of concerned businessmen who had money to help Indian tribes,” said Raymond Reyes, then executive director of the Cesar de Aline tribe in Idaho and now director of Indian education at Gonzaga University. "I thought it was going to be a group of funders who could meet funding sources. Instead, it was all this L. Ron Hubbard stuff.”

The Concerned Businessmen's Association did not respond to repeated calls and a letter from the St. Petersburg Times.

U.S. Rep. Floyd Flake, D-N.Y., accepted a trip to attend a black history and arts seminar at the Fort Harrison last year. He said he thought the sponsoring group was called Celebration of the Arts.

"We did not know it was Scientology,” said Flake's press aide Edwin Reed, who also attended. "We didn't really realize that, but with L. Ron Hubbard's pictures all around, we thought, 'What is in the heck is this?'"

Taxes and public relations
That's a question many Clearwater residents are still trying to answer, despite Scientologists' attempts to fade into the mainstream. Former mayor Cazares said, "Just the fact that they're quiet doesn't mean that they're not active. The nature of the beast has not changed.

Longtime residents "still believe that something is going on," said current Mayor Rick Curvey. "The general public is still leery and would like to see them out of town, which of course is not a reality, but the public's still concerned.”

So are Pinellas government officials. The City of Clearwater and the church are in the midst of a five-year legal fight over an ordinance that, if enforced, would require Scientology to disclose extensive information about its finances. The church says the law is unconstitutional.

Then there's Scientology's tax bill. With more than $21 million in assessed property, the Church of Scientology is the biggest property owner in downtown Clearwater. Since moving to Clearwater, the organization has assembled 12 properties on nine parcels of land. It hasn't paid property taxes since 1981, and its tax bill to date stands at $2.84 million, said O. Sanford Jasper, Pinellas tax collector.

Pinellas Property Appraiser Ron Schulte argues that Scientology should have to pay the taxes. To that end,
County Attorney Susan Churuti said in court documents that the church's Clearwater operation is merely an "alter ego" of California-run Scientology operations - which, according to a federal judge, helped enrich the group's founder, L. Ron Hubbard. The Pinellas tax battle may be settled in court in 1989, said Circuit Judge Howard P. Rice.

Several years ago, the church offered to pay its tax bill in a display of public spirit - as long as the money was considered a "gift" rather than a tax. But Schulte said he was in office to assess taxes, not gifts. He declined the offer, and insisted on calling taxes just that: taxes.

Community Influence

While the church presses its tax case in the courts, it continues to extend its influence in the community and court public opinion. The church's own publications reinforce the theme of a community-minded public relations strategy.

The scheduling magazine Impact recently recycled this message from group founder Hubbard: Hit for the key spots by whatever means, the head of the women's club, the personnel director of a company, the leader of a good orchestra, the president of the secretary, the advisor of the trade union - any key spot. Make a good sound living at it, drive a good car, but get your job done, handle and be the people you meet and bring about a better earth.

Scientists hold key spots in a variety of venues around Pinellas, and several private businesses in Clearwater - Snow Software, Arlene's Childcare and Making Magic, Inc., a distributor of velvet art, among them - are run by church members, according to a Scientology directory. These business owners would not talk to a reporter, saying their religion has no public relevance.

Three Clearwater enterprises, however, have stronger ties to the church: True School, Jefferson Academy and Singer Consultants.

True School, at 1831 Drew St., and Jefferson Academy, 1740 N. Highland Ave., are private "Hubbard Method" schools that use an approach developed by Scientology's founder. Vivian Godfrey, one of two teachers at Jefferson, said that Hubbard educational technology deals only with education. "The school has absolutely no connection with the Church of Scientology."

Ms. Godfrey and the other teacher, Sandy Mamer, are listed as "participating members of the Church of Scientology in Who's Here?, a directory of church members around Tampa Bay. As for True School, an advertisement in Who's Here? lists "child auditing" among the school's programs.

Audiating, a form of counseling, is the basis of Scientology practice. True School officials did not respond to a reporter's requests for an interview. Singer Consultants, 1001 S. Myrtle Ave., is a management consulting firm catering to chiropractors. Like California-based Sleuth Management Consultants (dentists) and Upendra of New Hampshire (computer professionals), Singer is licensed by Scientology to teach Hubbard "management technology." Marketing, billing and staff development are emphasized. Clients say Scientology is touted as a self-improvement option.

Singer managers did not return a reporter's calls, but last year said they don't recruit for the church. However, a recent Singer advertisement in a directory of scientists said that "more people have been moved onto and up the Bridge" - a term referring to fulfilling Scientology's goals - "by this group than any other in history, and this is just the beginning."

Elsewhere around Clearwater:

Muriel McKay, once a Scientology public affairs official, serves on the executive committee of the Pinellas County Republican Party and represents a Clearwater voting precinct. "She conducts herself admirably," said Edie Kennedy, the GOP's parliamentarian. "She's efficient, she's honest, she's a really good member."

Ms. McKay did not respond to several telephone messages from a reporter seeking her comment.

The teen nightclub Off Limits, in Clearwater and Brandon, is owned and operated by a partnership of at least two Scientologists. Off Limits serves no alcohol and "provides a safe place for kids to have fun," said part owner LaVonna Applebaum.

County licenses and state corporate records show that the partnership that owns the clubs is named Tone 40 Limited. "Tone-40" is a term distinct to Scientology: It is the ultimate level on Scientology's "tone scale" of existence, which runs from 0.1, for "serenity of being," according to the Dianetics and Scientology Technical Dictionary. The church has absolutely no connection with the business, just as the Catholic Church has no connection with businesses owned by members of that church," said Ray Cassano, board on state records as the sole director of Tone 40 Limited.

Richie Stone, 18, a former bouncer at the Clearwater club, 14100 U.S. 19 S. He said Ms. Applebaum used to tell employees, "Why don't you all go to the classes with us? It's good for your attitudes. It's good for your tempers."

Ms. Applebaum said, "Quite frankly, if I can find a way to help somebody, I try to help - if they ask for it. If they did not ask for help, I would not offer it."

Stone said he did not seek that advice.
An Overview Of
L. Ron Hubbard's Cosmology

$6,500.00 Course...

Xenu's Cruel Response
To Overpopulated World

By Stephen Koff
St. Petersburg Times

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA., -- It was like something out of a science fiction
script but L. Ron Hubbard, the founder
of Scientology, claimed it was fact.

"Xenu," he called the central char-
acter. Xenu ruled the 90-planet Galac-
tic Confederation 75-million years ago,
when overpopulation was a problem.

So Xenu solved the problem. He
trapped selected beings and flew them
to volcanoes on Earth, then called
Terrence. He then dropped powerful
H-bombs on the volcanoes.

The beings were destroyed in a wall
of fire. However, their spirits, or
"thetans," weren't. Gathering them into
clusters, Xenu trapped the thetans in
frozen alcohol and glycol.

Then he finished his cruel plan: He
electronically implanted the thetans
so they would reproduce in subse-
cquent generations of man and cause
sexual perversion and other abnormal
behavior.

The implants are in us -- each of us
... today..."

Though such beliefs may seem far-
fetching, Scientology documents show
they are part of upper-level Scientol-
ogy training known as OT III, short for
Operating Thetan III. OT III is the
third of 15 steps on Scientology's
advanced ladder, climbed by believ-
ers after reaching the stage of "clear."

OT III training, which is supposed to
remove the implants by revisiting the
Xenu incident and breaking through
the wall of fire, is offered in Clearwa-
ter at a cost of $6,500, according to a
fall 1988 rate sheet.

Details of OT III are considered
confidential. When church documents
describing Xenu surfaced during a
1985 trial in Los Angeles, Scientology
lawyers tried unsuccessfully to imme-
diately seal them. Gerald Armstrong,
a former Scientologist who discov-
ered that many of Hubbard's creden-
tials and claims were false, described
in a court document why the group so
closely guards Xenu.

"In Scientology, people are told that
if they read even part of the story
before they have progressed through
all the various lower Scientology steps,
at the cost of tens of thousands of
dollars, their subconscious minds will
be standardized, and they will "free-
wheel, ..."" Armstrong said, "Their
mind will go out of control, they will
not be able to eat or sleep and they will
die."

A Hubbard memo obtained by Clear-
water police said pneumonia may also
result, as the implants are calculated to
kill by pneumonia anyone who tries to
"solve" them. 

A Scientology leader, Hubbard, said:
"This is why only properly applied training would suc-
ceed, Hubbard said.

Armstrong said the Xenu story was
identical to the screenplay for Revolt
in the Stars, a film written by Hubbard.
The film never got commercial fi-
ancing and was not released.

(above story is reprinted from the
St. Petersburg, Fla., Times, Dec. 23,
1988 with permission. It is one of
several published reports reflecting the
same incident -- all reports are essen-
tially the same in content.)
JUDGE HOLDS UP SCIENTOLOGY AUCTION

38

ST. PETERBURG TIMES W FRIDAY, JULY 14, 1989

Church has to pay taxes
Court to decide whether

CTAWARES — A judge has decided to

Judge holds up Scientology auction

On July 13, the county held the county land. If
Said Thubot, "This is a decision and that
The Florida Attorney General's Office said no decision to
Scientology lawsuit. Paul LaViolette of Tampa

T wo things to be examined,

"No property," then they are a religion and that

The county's suit that the county can't go

The county's bill that the county can't go

The court's court that the county can't go
NEWKIRK, Okla., July 16 (AP) — When a California group received Oklahoma’s permission to open a 75-bed drug and alcohol treatment center on an Indian reservation, people in nearby Newkirk thought the project would ease local economic troubles. But what was brought on by stumps in the oil and farming businesses. The initial euphoria has been replaced by distrust, frustration and fear.

Townspersons say the California group, Narconon International, has not been honest about its affiliation with the Church of Scientology, its financing, its medical credentials and its plans for the project, which is to attract mostly out-of-state clientele.

Narconon officials denied that the project had anything to do with Scientology, the townspeople say, until Newkirk officials produced a Scientology magazine with an article titled, “Trained Scientologyists to Staff Huge Oklahoma Facility.”

And the mayor, Garry Bilger, says Narconon tried to dupe this town of 2,400 people at a ceremony where a group presented Narconon with a check for $200,000 and a study praising its work. The presenter turned out to be part of Narconon itself.

Scientology, founded in 1954 by L. Ron Hubbard has grown into an international religion that at its peak in the mid-1970’s claimed six million members around the world and annual earnings. The faith is based on Mr. Hubbard’s concepts of mental health through which members can achieve a “clear state.”

Concerns for Town Growth

Its critics have labeled Scientology a cult, and Scientologists have battled the Internal Revenue Service and fought lawsuits filed by former members charging the group with fraud and mental abuse.

In an interview last month, Mayor Bilger said, “People interested in coming to this town will see the Church of Scientology thing — the cult thing — and I think that will hurt our possibilities for growth and development.”

Some townspeople say they are worried about the kind of people the project will attract and that the 70-building campus will become a Scientology recruiting station after it opens.

“Narconon’s Question a Drug Project

September.

“Dear Mr. Smith declined to be more specific about the identity or whereabouts of these ‘outside sources with criminal motives.’

“Trust me, I know,” he said.

Narconon, like Scientology, has a sometimes turbulent history. In Spain last year, the authorities charged Narconon with swindling clients and luring them into Scientology.

Seventy-one people were arrested, including the Scientology president, Heber Jentzsch. Hundreds of documents were seized, and a Spanish judge froze bank accounts holding $300,000 while an investigation continues.

Narconon officials say Newkirk’s concern is unwarranted. They say Narconon is a legitimate, worldwide drug and alcohol rehabilitation program with 22 years’ experience.

A Narconon spokesman, Simon Hogarth, acknowledged that Narconon is supported financially by Scientology, but he added that the group has no “direct ties” to Scientology.

Narconon says its rehabilitation program is based on Mr. Hubbard’s methods, using withdrawal, diet supplement, exercise and sauna sessions to treat addicts.

Another Narconon spokesman, Gary Smith, said he tried to assure the town that Narconon’s “sole intention is to get people off drugs.”

“There’s fear being put into the town by false information being fed in there by somebody who’s in favor of drug abuse,” Mr. Smith said. “They’re either connected to selling drugs or they’re using drugs.”

“Trust me, I know”

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The case of Cut: Scientology Case Cut was a significant event in the field of Scientology. The details of the case are not fully clear from the document provided, but it appears to involve legal and ethical considerations related to the organization and its practices.

The image contains additional content that seems to be unrelated to the primary discussion about the case. It includes a section on economic activities and a passage about creating a base in Los Angeles.

Overall, the document seems to be discussing legal and organizational matters related to Scientology, with references to financial and ethical considerations.
Court Affirms Ruling Against Scientologists

By William Vogeler
Daily Journal Staff Reporter

Giving and then taking away, a state appellate court affirmed a judgment against the Church of Scientology for coercive practices that forced a former member to the brink of insanity, but then reduced by $27.5 million an award against the church.

The 2nd District Court of Appeal held Tuesday that the Los Angeles-based church does not have constitutional protection for practices it employed during the 1970s to destroy the business and cripple the mental stability of Larry Wollersheim, who tried to leave the religion. The court concluded that the church leaders deliberately tried to ruin Wollersheim economically and possibly psychologically, and therefore held it could sue the church for intentional infliction of emotional distress.

However, the court also determined that the jury award of $55 million in compensatory damages was "grossly disproportionate," and that $25 million for punitive damages was "preposterous," reducing the total award to $2.5 million in Wollersheim v. Church of Scientology, B023193.

Rev. Heber Jentzsch said the decision was a victory for the church.

"Victory" for Church

"We consider it a complete and total victory," he said. "We couldn't be more pleased at the enormous loss that they suffered on this. It cost them more to put it on than they won."

Jentzsch said the church may appeal the decision on the constitutional issues.

Lawrence Heller, who represented the church in the appeal, said he could not comment on the case because he had not read the opinion by press time.

Charles O'Reilly, who represented the plaintiff before the 2nd District, said he could not comment on the case because he is no longer representing Wollersheim. However, he said the court had not accurately described the practices of the church.

"The decision epitomizes Scientology akin to calling a malignant tumor benign," he said.

Wollersheim had been a member of the church for most of the 1970s, but tried to leave the religion when he was convinced the church was causing him psychological problems. After Wollersheim quit the church, Scientology leaders orchestrated a campaign to destroy his photography business.

Campaign by Church

Church members who were employed with Wollersheim quit, told others not to do business with him and to renego on debts owed to Wollersheim. He then filed suit, alleging fraud, and intentional and negligent infliction of emotional injury.

Wollersheim, who had been an incipient manic depressive most of his life, proved at trial that the church had inflicted severe emotional injury on him through certain practices. In addition to showing that the church had intentionally destroyed his business, he proved that he had been forced to remain with the church through coercive counseling.

During this time, Wollersheim's mental condition worsened, and he contemplated suicide.

A jury found the church liable for intentional and negligent infliction of emotional injury and awarded $30 million in compensatory and punitive damages. On appeal, the 2nd District affirmed except as to the finding of negligent infliction of emotional distress, and reduced the award to $2.5 million.

Harking back to the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, the appeal court said no church has religious freedom to torture and execute heretics and miscreants.

"(Should any church seek to resurrect the inquisition in this country under a claim of free religious expression, can anyone doubt the constitutional authority of an American government to halt the torture and executions?" wrote Justice Earl Johnson Jr., joined by Presiding Justice Mildred Lilie and Justice Fred Woods. "And can anyone seriously question the right of the victims of our hypothetical modern day inquisition to sue their tormentors for any injuries — physical or psychological — they sustained?"

Thursday, July 20, 1989