

Scientology is back at City Hall

Clearwater commissioners discuss church's influence

■ Phillies sign spring-training deal with city. **Page 3**

By **CURTIS KRUEGER**
Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — City commissioners presided over a debate Thursday on a thorny topic that had not raged in City Hall for years — whether the Church of Scientology helps or hurts Clearwater.

And in a side issue, a Scientology official said the organization would rather renovate its existing buildings in downtown Clearwater and possibly consolidate them, rather than buy more local land.

The organization owns 12 parcels, mostly in downtown Clearwater, worth more than \$21-million.

A Scientology planning official said the organization also planned some renovations of the former Bank of Clearwater building in the 500 block of Cleveland Street.

There were two discussions of Scientology during Thursday's commission meeting. The first came during a portion of the meeting in which residents are allowed to address the commissioners on items not on the agenda.

A group of former Scientologists told commissioners that the organization is a cult and said the public deserves to know more.

But Scientologists said their organization is a benevolent one that helps its members and the city.

It was one of the few long debates in City Hall on the Scientologists since the early 1980s, when the commission had a series of hearings to investigate the organization's activities in Clearwater.

The international organization has its spiritual headquarters in Clearwater and bases its teachings on the writings of the late L. Ron Hubbard, author of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*.

The former Scientologists were prompted to speak because commissioners were scheduled to discuss a site plan for a new \$3.5-million building the organization plans to build at the Sandcastle Motel, 200 N Osceola Ave.

But commissioners did not consider the debate when discussing the site plan. They said the site-plan discussion should center only on whether the plan conformed with Clearwater's land-development code. That discussion occurred later in the meeting.

Commissioners voted to refer the site plan to the city staff for review. The final site plan must come back to the commission for a final vote.

The issue took up about 45 minutes of commission

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Scientology

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time. When the discussion became repetitive, Mayor Rita Garvey's patience appeared to be wearing thin.

"Unfortunately the City Commission meeting has just been used," said Bill Daugherty, spokesman for the Scientologists.

"By both sides," Garvey said.

The former Scientologists made these allegations:

■ One man, Terry Prueher of Tampa, said he quit a job at Gen-



DAUGHERTY

al Motors to join the Scientologists and said he was promised \$10,000 for work he planned to do for the organization. But he said he never received the money. He also said he was robbed and injured after leaving the organization. But he didn't offer evidence that Scientologists were to blame.

"The hard core of Scientology is criminal," he said.

■ "I think it's a damaging cult," said Lisa Hyatt of St. Petersburg.

She said she was a member for a year and during that time, she said she got about two hours of sleep per night. She said that the organization altered her ability to perceive things normally and that she was having trouble even focusing on the commissioners' faces.

She urged city officials to learn as much about the organization as possible.

"It will get somebody you know

sooner or later," she said.

■ "I don't have anything good to say about Scientology," because I lost a sister to Scientology," said Joann Davis of Tampa. Because her sister was heavily involved in Scientology activities, the two lost touch. But now the sister is out of the organization, she said.

Mar-

Wakefield of Tampa, who helped organize the group, said she is willing to talk to anyone with questions about Scientology.

She has spoken out against Scientology despite a court order in which she agreed not to discuss some aspects of the organization.

Scientologists, all from Clear-



WAKEFIELD

water, painted a much different picture:

■ Shannon Kern said she has convinced two friends to stop abusing drugs by introducing them to Scientology. "Scientology really does work, and it really does help me and my family," she said.

■ Marjo Kimmel said Scientology has helped her personally and professionally. She said she runs three businesses and has managed to form a meaningful relationship with her mother.

■ Steve Litter, who said he has been a Scientologist since childhood, said he has never heard of Scientologists engaging in the kinds of questionable practices that the critics described. He called Scientology "a gentle religion."

■ Mark Gould said he found the criticisms of his religion repulsive. "You would find it kind of awkward to be a Christian standing, defending your religion."

Religion news

MILWAUKEE SENTINEL Saturday, August 5, 1989 / PAGE 5, PART 4

Ex-Scientologist calls church a moneymaker, not a religion

By CHESTER SHEARD
Sentinel staff writer

Claims that the Church of Scientology is a religion are false, a former member charged.

The church is an intelligence and information agency that uses mind manipulation, hypnotism and other methods to gradually turn members into agents to financially enhance the organization, said Larry Wollersheim, a former salesman and touring spokesman for the Church of Scientology.

After spending 11 years as an active member in the church, Wollersheim, 40, a native of Milwaukee, sued the organization in 1980 for intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress.

A Los Angeles Superior Court jury awarded Wollersheim \$30 million in damages in 1986 for the mental anguish he suffered during the years he was a member of the church.

After an appeal by the church, the State of California Circuit Court of Appeals reduced the award to \$2.5 million July 19. Wollersheim said he planned to appeal the ruling.

In 1987, Wollersheim was offered \$4 million to settle the case out of court. He turned it down.

Although he has been "running" scared for 10 years, Wollersheim said he feels it is now his obligation to expose Scientology for what it is.

"I want to encourage people to use the law to fight this type of thing," he said in a rare interview since the decision. He was in Milwaukee recently visiting family.

"I could easily have taken the money they offered me, but I feel it is my obligation to help educate people about how to deal with cultist groups that brainwash their children."

But he cautions parents against kidnaping a child from a cult, saying "that can bring on a lot of problems most people are not equipped to handle."

People concerned about family members and friends who are caught up in a cultist situation should not attempt to confront the organization. Instead, he said, they should contact groups that have expertise in dealing with cults.

Wollersheim recommended:

"They claim to be a religion and use the right of belief as constitutional protection, but their use of religious beliefs to break the law violates that protection."

— LARRY WOLLERSHEIM,
former member,
Church of Scientology



American Family Foundation, P.O. Box 338, Weston, Mass. 02183; and Spiritual Counterfeits, P.O. Box 4306, Berkeley, Calif. 94704.

Scientology teaches that its members are the elite of society and are here to right the world's wrongs, the former member said.

Wollersheim said more than 90% of the people who apply to become members of the church are turned down because they doubt or question the principles of the church.

The other 10% are accepted and immediately made to feel that they are members of an elitist group who are actually reawakened beings destined to take over the earth, he said.

Wollersheim was 18 when he first encountered Scientology. He was in San Francisco on a break from the University of Wisconsin — Madison when he met a woman who complimented him on his appearance and told him he showed signs of great intelligence.

The woman coaxed him into a building where he was confronted by a man who said he wanted give him some tests to prove his intelligence.

"It was the '60s, and people were very free," Wollersheim said. "I thought it was a come-on by the woman so I went along with the testing."

"I was 18, from an upper middle-class community with no street smarts, and a person who was prone to be, what is meant in hypnosis

terms, highly suggestible. I was very suitable for their aims."

The method used by the church hierarchy to transform new members with promises into the type of human machine needed to advance Scientology causes is called "auditing," Wollersheim said.

"Auditing" is a form of intense counseling that induces one to go to such extremes as to discontinue contact with family members if they are outside of the church, he said.

Wollersheim said he returned to the building the next day for a "communication course" where he had to sit for hours staring at another person without blinking.

"This caused me to go into a type of trance, and I began to feel that I was out of my body, that I was on a mind-transforming drug," he said. "They speak of the feeling as a 'big win,' a sign that you are an immortal being and that you have a source of power within you that needs to be released and that only they (Scientists) could show me how to release that power."

"The feeling was so overpowering that I believed they had a phenomenal power and I had to stay with them."

Wollersheim said they promised him he would acquire a higher IQ, success in business, freedom from illnesses and pain, occult powers, to love his body, a quick mind and ability to influence people.

"But at the base of it all is fear that if you don't stay with and learn their teachings, you will have a failure in life," said Wollersheim.

His star rose quickly in the church, he said. During the 11 years he was active, he lectured to incoming members and delved into their financial assets. He estimated that he contributed several million dollars for the church, contributing about \$100,000 of his own money.

However, in 1979, he began to feel the strain. A girlfriend told him she looked as though he was dying, urging him to leave the church.

"My hair was coming out. My weight was dropping. I wasn't eating. I was spending all of my time, at 18 hours a day, working for the church," Wollersheim said. "I was caught up... that I didn't know I was. I was becoming psychotic, a human guinea pig."

Knowing what happened to defected members, Wollersheim said he was afraid to leave.

However, word spread that he was thinking about leaving, and Wollersheim said church leaders began a retribution program against him. Intensive was the program that Wollersheim eventually sought psychiatric help.

Wollersheim told church officials he had to get away for a while and needed a rest.

He said one of the top intelligence officers told him, "Don't ever do a thing that has ever happened to in Scientology."

8-10-89

Ex-Member Defies Gag Order, Speaks Out Against Scientology

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — A former member of the Church of Scientology is defying church lawyers and a federal judge by publicly alleging that the church held her captive and committed fraud by promising to cure her mental illness.

Margery Wakefield, 41, is prohibited under a 1986 federal court settlement from speaking out against the cult, which has its spiritual headquarters in Clearwater.

But she says she is ignoring the gag order so she can expose church practices and warn potential members of what she sees as dangers.

Ms. Wakefield spent 12 years in the church before suing in 1982, charging that Scientologists held her captive, committed fraud, broke their promises to cure her mental illness and practiced medicine without a license. Four years later, Scientology officials paid her \$200,000 in return for her silence.

At the request of church lawyers, U.S. District Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich reinforced the settlement in May, but Ms. Wakefield has ignored the ruling and the church has asked the judge to find her in criminal contempt.

Ms. Wakefield contends that Scientology is a dangerous cult, based on occult practices and mind control. It stole 12 years of her life and pulled her away from the psychiatric help she really needed, she said.

"I'm prepared to go to jail," she

told the Orlando Sentinel Tuesday in an interview in Tampa. "In fact, it may not be the worst thing. It would be an act that would get a lot of attention, and my purpose is to raise the awareness of people in this area about this church."

Church spokesman Bill Daugherty dismissed the controversy Ms. Wakefield has raised.

"This one gal," he said, "she's not really any concern. She's an unstable person—she's been in and out of mental hospitals. I don't know what her deal is."

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, a writer of science fiction. His 1950 book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health" is the bible of the Church of Scientology. He called Scientology "applied religious philosophy" and said its practice could increase intelligence, improve behavior and unlock the secrets of life.

Ms. Wakefield said she became a church member in 1968, while she was recovering from a nervous breakdown at the University of Michigan.

From the beginning, she said, she was hypnotized and brainwashed by the church. Scientology gained control of her mind and will during hours-long sessions in which she would repeatedly answer questions, stare at an everyday object or repeatedly perform routine tasks.

After years of such treatments,

she suffered intense headaches, paranoia and nightmares. "I started just going down the tubes," she said.

Scientology leaders feared she was a suicide risk, Ms. Wakefield said, and feared she could bring bad publicity. They locked her in a room for two weeks and finally put her on a plane to Madison, Wis., to rejoin her family, she said.

Later, she said, Scientologists tracked her down and held her for three days, forcing her to sign an agreement promising not to sue the church in exchange for a \$16,000 check. She used the money to repay her father, who had loaned her money for many of the church's expensive sessions, she said.

In 1982, she filed her lawsuit, resulting in the gag order.

Since leaving the church, Ms. Wakefield had been in and out of mental institutions 14 times in four years, mainly for depression. She blames the false promises of Scientology for keeping her from the psychiatric care she says she really needed.

She is now working with Cult Awareness Network, a national group which uses her to warn potential Scientologists away from the church.

"My biggest hope," she said, "is that something can be done about Scientology so that other people don't have to go through what I've gone through. It's been a horrible experience."

Scientologists Continue Expansion In Florida Town

CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP) — The City Commission here has approved a site plan for a three-story addition on Clearwater Harbor property owned by the Church of Scientology, now the city's fourth largest property owner.

The preliminary document was sent to city planners late Thursday after a testy public hearing involving proponents and opponents.

Scientologists moved their reli-

gious headquarters to Clearwater in 1975 when they bought the old Fort Harrison Hotel. The group has since bought 11 other Clearwater properties, bringing total property values to \$21.5 million.

Proponents argued that Scientology helps people overcome drug and mental health problems. Opponents said it is a brainwashing cult that is taking over the city.

"It is the most honest and compassionate religion I've ever known," said Steve Luttler, who has been a member for 25 years.

But former Scientologist Lisa Hyatt, 26, spoke of a religion that worked her 22 hours a day and took over her mind.

"I still have nightmares. It's what happens to your brain when they reach that deep into you," she said.

City Leaders Call For State Review Of Narconon Program At Chilocco Indian School North Of Town

Newkirk's School Board, City Commission, and Chamber of Commerce have jointly sent a 67 page document to 16 State and National leaders asking them to support a special review of the Narconon-Chilocco drug rehabilitation program and its connection with Scientology.

The cover letter of the package of exhibits says in part, "Based on this information, it appears that Narconon's primary objective is Scientology recruitment and not drug abuse treatment. Our community is very concerned and we are requesting your help in obtaining a complete review of their operation and the licensing procedure which allows Narconon to operate in Oklahoma. It is signed by the Mayor, the President of the Newkirk Board of Education, and the President of the Newkirk Chamber of Commerce.

The first exhibit alleges that there have been several instances of misrepresentation made by Narconon to the community, and the balance of the package contains individual documents, media reports, and sources of further information that the signers hope will cause officials to take a second look at Narconon.

Mayor Garry Bilger feels that it is pretty well documented that Narconon is a Scientology controlled organization. He points to a ceremony held at Chilocco on April 8, 1989. At the ceremony Bilger observed a representative of the Association For Better Living and Education (ABLE) "donate" at \$200,000.00 check to Narconon for seed money to get the project started.

Bilger contends that at the ceremony an obvious effort was made to have everyone believe that ABLE and Narconon were two entirely separate organizations that had nothing to do with each other until then.

But Narconon's own promotional material says it is owned by ABLE. And ABLE turns out to be one of the many organizations on the Scientology organization chart.

At a public meeting in Newkirk on May 8, 1989, Mr. Leroy Bridges of the State Mental health Department told a group of about 80 people that there would be "no Oklahoma patients" treated at the facility, except for a few indigent Indians. Mr. Bridges also said that no state money would be involved.

But a document in the package, written sometime before July 1988, allegedly by Mr. John Duff, president of Narconon International, lists local and Oklahoma people as the top priorities in the Narconon marketing plan. It also lists "State Contracts that pay for beds," as a priority.

At the same meeting, Mr. Bridges told the citizens of Newkirk that Narconon had voluntarily placed itself under jurisdiction of the state for matters of law enforcement and inspection of their program and facilities.

However, a letter from Sheriff Glenn Guinn included in the package says, "As I understand it, I have no authority on Chilocco land. Everything at Chilocco comes under the F.B.I., and we have one F.B.I. agent in this area stationed at Enid."

The document allegedly authored by Mr. Duff also says that it is "essential" to procure state certification and licensing "because we will be providing services to both Indian and Non-Indian people paid through a fee for service, insurance coverage and possible state contracts. State licensing is mandatory for us to be able to accept Non-Indian clientele."

The package sent to the state says, "We find it curious that Narconon wants to be licensed in order to collect on state contracts and insurance policies from people Mr. Bridges has flatly said would not be served at the facility."

Narconon has consistently said it is not connected with the Church of Scientology, but the material in the package sent to the state seems to indicate that except for a "cold turkey" detoxification period, nearly all of the rest of the treatment consists of courses and programs also found on the Church of Scientology's religious progress

chart known as "The Bridge To Total Freedom."

City leaders are also questioning the cure rates claimed by Narconon. They consider it an exaggerated figure and say they have seen no data to support it. Several individuals involved in drug and alcohol rehabilitation in this area have said the cure rate for any program is between 15% and 30% at best.

Narconon spokesmen have said that the conversion rate of Narconon patients to Scientology is, variously, between 1% and 3%, and "under 10%." But an evaluation Team Report made to the California State Department of Health said "it was clear that nearly all the patients hoped to become Scientologists." Other reports from former Scientology members and Narconon patients puts the figure at between 50% and 75%.

Other exhibits contained in the package mailed to state officials consists of charts, news reports from around the country and several foreign countries, a radio transcript, and 13 pages of references for further reading or information which city leaders hope will be enough to convince the state that it needs to take a much closer look at this project before it is licensed for operation in the State of Oklahoma.

Scientific And Medical Accuracy Of Narconon Program Questioned

A Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Oklahoma calls it "pure unadulterated 'cow pies'".

A Doctor of Internal Medicine in Ponca City says it is "filled with...many false generalizations, internal inconsistencies, outright lies, and potentially dangerous treatments."

They are talking about the Purification part of the Narconon drug rehabilitation program that will be offered at Chilocco.

According to a document called the Narconon Technical Line-Up copyrighted 1984 by Narconon, their rehabilitation program consists of several steps:

First, there is a Detoxification and Withdrawal program, followed by a Drug Education/Orientation lecture, Hard TR's (Training Routines), the Purification program, Objectives, the Drug Rundown, and the Way To Happiness Rundown.

Several area individuals have ask for and have been promised a copy of the Narconon "protocols" that will be used when Narconon is in operation, but after several weeks, nothing has been forthcoming from Narconon.

However, Narconon and Scientology documents have been provided by former Scientologists, Narconon volunteers, and Narconon patients which

give a pretty clear idea of program contents.

One of those documents, a Hubbard Communications Bulletin called "The Purification Rundown Replaces The Sweat Program" is said to contain the core of L. Ron Hubbard's "technology" regarding the removal of toxic substances such as drugs from the body.

It is a regimen which includes exercise, sauna sweat out, nutrition including vitamins, minerals, etc, as well as oil intake, and a properly ordered schedule of activity.

This and several related documents were offered for evaluation by a University of Oklahoma Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, and by a Ponca City Doctor who specializes in internal medicine. Their reports are being forwarded by city leaders to the State Health Department.

The OU Professor in his August 4, 1989 report, writes, "My overall comment on Mr. Hubbard's literature is that there is an absolute lack of data to support his assertion that the Purification Program succeeds in doing what the presently adopted programs fail to do. The documents reviewed also contain many truths and half-truths."

"However," he continues, "there is no evidence that Mr. Hubbard's approach will cure these ills."

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