

# Captivity Case May be Tied to Faith

■ **Investigation:** Church teachings may explain why a mentally ill woman was kept locked up in her Pomona home, police say.

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TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Pomona police said Friday they are investigating whether beliefs espoused by the Church of Scientology led a family to confine a mentally disabled woman in a cell-like bedroom at a Phillips Ranch house.

While stressing that neither the church nor its beliefs are under investigation, police said they want to know if Scientology practices could explain why the woman was kept in confinement.

Police and Los Angeles County mental health workers discovered Marianne Coenan, 31, locked in a sparsely furnished room with a boarded-up window after they entered the residence on Jan. 5.

The woman was incoherent and had bruises and scratches on her legs, wrists and neck, police said. She was kept behind a door into which a small, square opening was cut and steel bars had been inserted, police said.

Her husband, Edwin Coenan, 41, was arrested the same day and booked on suspicion of false imprisonment and endangering a dependent adult. He has been released on \$5,000 bail, and no charges have been filed.

The woman's father and stepmother, Floyd and Audrey Twede, as well as the victim's half-brother, Steven, are also under investigation, police said. The Twedes rented the house on Rolling Hills Drive where the woman was confined.

Police said they saw Scientology printed material in the house and plan to review documents written

by Scientology's late founder L. Ron Hubbard that describe how to treat mental breakdowns. In the documents, Hubbard recommended isolation as a treatment and also warned his followers to avoid conventional psychiatric care.

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SGT. ELIAS VALDEZ

given fact that they are Scientologists," Pomona Police Detective Carolyn Lundstrum said.

"The family also made statements to the effect that they didn't believe in some forms of medicine and psychiatric help," Sgt. Elias Valdez said. "We are trying to determine what connection the beliefs had with the false imprisonment."

Investigators said other relatives and friends of the woman said she had been kept in the room for at least eight weeks after suffering a mental breakdown in October.

"Attorneys for the husband and parents have said that Marianne became so violent, she was hurting herself," Lundstrum said. "So they created a space where she could not harm herself. They said they did it for her own safety."

The woman's confinement came to the attention of authorities after Cathy Speer of Hillsboro, Ore., said

her sister failed to arrive in Oregon for the Christmas holidays, Lundstrum said. Speer asked police to go to the Phillips Ranch home to check on her, the detective added.

After Edwin Coenan's arrest, a relative called the Church of Scientology and was referred to Timothy Bowles, whose Los Angeles law firm represents the church on various matters. Bowles told The Times that he had been briefly involved in the case, but is not defending Coenan.

Church spokeswoman Shirley Young confirmed Friday that the Coenans and Twedes are Scientologists but added that the care of Marianne Coenan "was not a church matter . . . nor did the church take any stand with relationship to her treatment."

Specifically, police said they will review a "technical bulletin" authored in 1974 by Hubbard, in which he describes the "Introspection Rundown"—a process for treating people with mental breakdowns.

He wrote that people suffering severe mental anguish, or a "psychotic break," should be isolated and "destimulated" to protect them and others from possible harm. During the process, Hubbard added, the "muzzled rule is in force," meaning that no one should speak to the troubled person or talk within earshot.

The document also articulates Hubbard's understanding of psychosis and his disdain for psychiatry.

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Asked if the family was using a church-approved treatment for psychosis, church spokeswoman Young said Coenan's isolation was "a medical matter" and added that "the church takes no official stand on it."

However, church officials, relatives and police said Coenan had been under medical supervision during the two months of confinement.

Young, asked whether the family was applying the "Introspection Rundown," said, "I'm just becoming abreast of the situation. So far as what they did, this is a sad and unfortunate case."

Detective Lundstrum, meanwhile, said the bulletin "may help explain what the people were doing, but the information has absolutely no legal bearing on the case."

Detectives visited Marianne Coenan several times this week at a private psychiatric hospital in Pomona, Lundstrum said. Coenan appeared to be in fair physical condition, and "she had some lucid moments, but she still has not been able to concentrate," the detective said.

"I haven't talked to her yet about the case," Lundstrum said. "She is not ready to be questioned."

She says things to herself, most of which I couldn't understand."

Relatives told police that her condition deteriorated over the past year, during which time she had been taken to several doctors.

One of those physicians was James R. Privitera, a Covina nutritionist and allergist. Coenan was brought to his office two months ago, and he recommended a CAT scan, which is a medical imaging procedure, Privitera said.

The doctor declined to discuss the case in detail, citing the need to protect the patient's privacy. Privitera said he told the police investigators he would discuss the case with them if they obtained a court order.

Privitera was placed on medical probation in 1980 after prescribing the controversial drug laetrile to cancer patients. In 1987, the state moved to revoke his probation and end his practice. Privitera has denied the allegations, and the case against him is pending.

Privitera said he has no connection to Scientology and the church has never steered patients to his practice.

Detectives said charges against Edwin Coenan must be formally filed by Thursday. At that time, charges against any other suspects will be filed, if there are any, Lundstrum said.