

'Scientology is my tool to survival'

AFTER 19 years of living and working in East Grinstead, it never ceases to amaze me to see the mystery that manages to collect around Saint Hill, Scientology and Scientologists.

I walk down London Road at various times of the day and night and see Scientologists busy in all walks of life and yet generally, few people locally have a real idea of why someone becomes involved with Scientology and studies and uses it.

Part of this fog is simply the difficulty that there will always be in getting someone to understand something for which he has no easy comparison.

When you talk about a practical religious philosophy that is not based on any worship but on a vast number of practical tools, such as communication and understanding that help people improve survival, you are talking about something to which most people just cannot relate.

The other part of the aura of mystery is the result of deliberate efforts by some with other interests to serve.

Scientology and Scientologists have never shrunk from controversy in condemning the growing chemical nature of society and rampant drug abuse.

They have taken on major vested interests by condemning physical psychiatric abuses such as

SCIENTOLOGY has long been surrounded by controversy. Despite criticism from many, a large number of local people embrace it. This week, the Courier gives a local businessman the chance to explain what it means to him personally.

chemical straight-jackets, electroshock and psychosurgery. Other opponents are motivated by the money they receive for their efforts.

The tactic of creating mystery, mistrust and hatred towards a minority group is not a new one in history.

Such attacks seek to create an atmosphere in which it becomes acceptable to attack members of such a group.

Hitler's Nazi Germany took this to a very high level of success in its persecution not only of Jews but various other minority groups.

Despite the efforts of vested interests and rumourmongers, Scientology continues to expand in the UK and internationally because it is effective and provides people with the tools that assist them to survive better.

At 44 years of age, I work locally as a financial adviser; I have an honours degree from university and various profes-

sional financial qualifications.

I work frequently with other Scientologists in my activities — professionals in their own fields such as solicitors and accountants.

When I am doing an evening or weekend course at Saint Hill, I come across people from all walks of life that have come there to learn tools they can use to improve their lives.

I have yet to meet John Travolta or Karen Black there, but I have chatted with Chic Corea and many other celebrities in their own fields — opera singers, artists, professional sportsmen, as well as other businessmen, builders, teachers, mothers and housewives, secretaries, taxi drivers and so on. They have come there a few miles or thousands of miles because they believe there is something practical to learn from Scientology, that they can use to improve their lives and their ability to survive.

In my own case, my involvement with Scientology goes back 23 years to when an old school mate simply suggested I read the book Dianetics by Ron Hubbard.

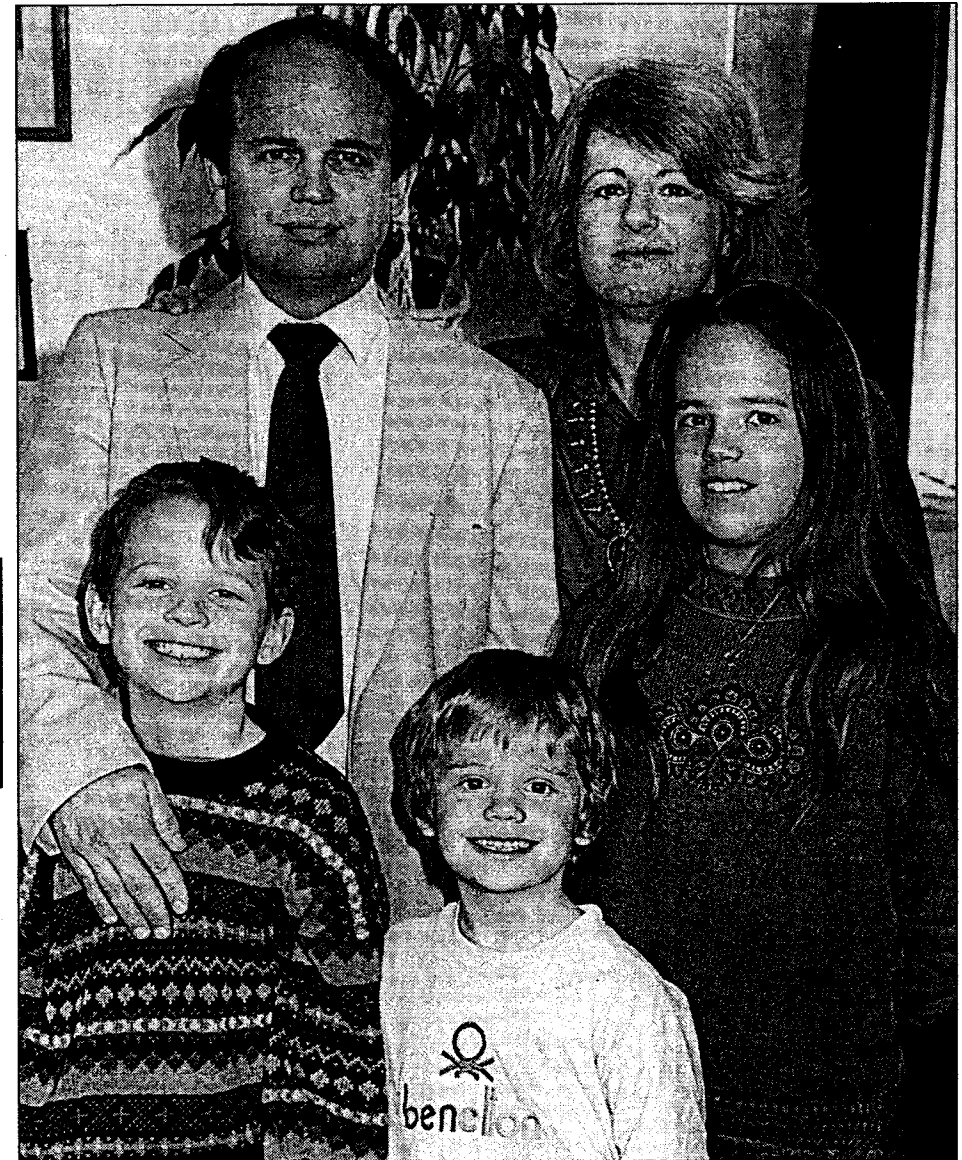
At that time, I had just finished university and despite my excellent academic results, I was interested in very little other than a 70s type of hippy-like existence.

After getting involved with Scientology, my life took quite a turn.

I used what I had learned from Scientology to obtain an excellent job and acquire skills that eventually enabled me to establish and manage a business.

From absolutely no interest in marrying or a family life, I married and 15 years later have three great children.

Where before I had little or no interest in the community or Government, I found myself taking more active and responsible positions in the groups I involved



Tom Shutster and his family, wife Marion and daughter Kathleen, 11, son Jon, nine, and son Benjamin, five

Photo number 68383/29

myself with. So the tools that Scientology have given me I consider very valuable indeed.

Scientologists come in all varieties and with all possible interests. What all have in common is an optimism for the future with the knowledge that

there are tools they can use to help improve their survival, the survival of their family, and the survival of their friends, the community and mankind generally.

Scientologists are good neighbours to have.

They will respect your right to your beliefs and expect the same respect for theirs.

Saint Hill Manor is open for tours every afternoon for those who want to know more, or who are just curious.

Tom B. Shuster