

Scientology Boom

A Disputed Religion's Growth

By Donovan Bess

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Today and tonight hundreds — perhaps thousands — of Californians will sit down in pairs and stare at one another.

One of them will give the other commands such as "Tell me something you wouldn't mind forgetting."

The one who is commanded will hold two tin cans attached by wires to an E-meter, a device that measures electrical resistance in the body. The commander will watch a needle on the device's circuit board in the belief that it measures emotional charge.

These people are doing "processing" in the Church of Scientology, which has decided this is its biggest year throughout the world. Today it has twice as many members in California as it had a year ago — and it's all out to take over the whole State.

It grows in spite of persistent legal actions against it by various governments. It now has a major church here and missions in Berkeley, Palo Alto and Santa Clara.

Scientology is being investigated by the British government, which last year issued an order banning foreigners from coming to the island to study at the church's world headquarters at East Grinstead, Sussex. The investigators want to know if it's socially harmful.

The Australian state of Victoria has banned Scientology outright.

In the United States the movement has been up to its hips in litigation. The Internal Revenue Service has contended it's not a church but a money-maker in the free-enterprise tradition. The courts don't agree.

E-METER

The Food and Drug Administration has been upset about the E-meter, which Scientologists rely on to measure their efforts to "flatten" problems. The courts have not upheld the FDA.

The E-meter is the piece of hardware that gives the people in "training" and "processing" a dramatic feeling of being psychological engineers.



SCIENTOLOGY 'MISSIONAIRE' JOHN McMASTER
The E-meter at work, measuring emotional energy

They also gather a sense of surety by following the precise drills laid out for them in writing by L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of the church and author of a book which gave the world, in 1950, a book on "Dianetics" that is the basis of the movement.

PROCESSING

With Scientology, Hubbard has blended the "mental health" theories in Dianetics into a theology through which he is venerated as a potential world savior.

In the church's buildings, large, blown-up photographs of Hubbard are placed in commanding positions on the walls.

"Processing" takes you through seven "grades of release" during sessions with an "auditor" who gives you commands and repeatedly asks you questions. The object is to lure you into uncovering incidents repressed into your subconscious mind.

Example: a young man recently came to the San Francisco church at 414 Mason street with a history of headaches. By pounding away with commands and questions from a Hubbard manual, the auditor got the young man to remember he had

once been shot in the head. A church spokesman said the headaches cleared up.

TRAINING

The auditor tries not to feel emotion as he processes his novitiate. He keeps a sharp eye on the E-meter needle.

If the needle jumps, you're supposed to be battling painful memories. When the needle "floats free," near the center of the circuit board, you're supposed to get a "release." So you're passed to the next grade.

In "training," you learn how to become an auditor by practicing on other church members.

When you make your first inquiry at your local Scientology church or mission, you're assured that if you head up "the whole track" toward "Clear" you'll win friends, influence people, and probably get more money.

LEVELS

As a Clear, you're officially beyond the personal, emotional troubles that blighted your life before you were converted.

Clear used to be the top. But Hubbard keeps inventing new levels. Now there are six grades of Operating Thetan (OT) levels above Clear.

An OT has "total cause

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over matter, energy, space, time and thought" and "is not in a body," the Scientology Abridged Dictionary says. Hubbard has written that an OT conceives of himself as "some distance from the body."

People on the road to Clear and beyond tell how they've experimented with off-beat religions, drugs or yoga and concluded that Scientology offers just as much salvation, but does it faster.

BOAT

Testimonials are passed out by your Success Director. You learn, for instance, how actor Stephen Boyd got processed to OT-6. "I guess," he has concluded, "that is about six steps above Nirvana."

These days Hubbard is cruising in the Mediterranean on the Apollo, a 5000-ton former British ferryboat recently fitted out with thick, deep-blue carpeting. It's the flagship of Scientology's mysterious "Sea Organization." On board Hubbard is doing research on two new OT levels.

This 58-year-old native of Nebraska is a likeable man who first won fame as the author of science fiction with an "Arabian Nights" flavor. Early this year he issued directives that 1969 is to be a boom year for his church. He has set up a system of assuring religious productivity that would be envied by Robert McNamara.

INCOME

Hubbard's personal "missionaire," John McMaster, says the income to the worldwide church was only \$10,000

a week in January, 1968, but rose to \$140,000 in the succeeding six months.

The American church claims 250,000 members in California, two and a half times more than a year ago. And there are three churches and nine missions in Southern California.

The land headquarters of



A portrait of L. Ron Hubbard dominates a room in the Los Angeles Scientology headquarters

Scientology is in Saint Hill Manor House, a 30-room, baronial mansion in Sussex occupied by the Maharajah of Jaipur before Hubbard bought it.

Americans heading for Clear had to go there to get it. But with the British restrictions on foreigners, Clear and OT grades are offered at

the church's Advanced Organization in Los Angeles

PRICES

Scientologists estimate the cost of getting Clear at \$4000 to \$5000. In the San Francisco church, you can get the first four grades of processing for a package price of \$617.50 if you pay in advance.

If you want a career in the church, you go in for training. To become a Hubbard Advanced Auditor, the package price is \$1360, or \$1235 if you pay in advance.

But on June 1 Hubbard put out a \$500 quickie course by which you can get on the staff as an auditor in two months.

Alan Albert, director of training for the Palo Alto Scientology mission, said he made \$17,500 last year as a Philco-Ford executive. He quit this job after spending 750 hours in Scientology auditing — and, he reported, he makes "about the same" salary now.

Top officials of the church in Los Angeles said, however, that's an unusually lucrative situation.

(Tomorrow: It's the True Way, say the young converts.)